

COMPTON AUDLEY.

VOL. II.

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COMPTON AUDLEY;

OR,

HANDS NOT HEARTS.

BY LORD WILLIAM LENNOX.

The hands of old gave hearts ;
But our new heraldry is— hands not hearts.

SHAKSPEARE.

Un tel hymen est l'enfer de ce monde.

VOLTAIRE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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COMPTON AUDLEY.

CHAPTER I.

AUTOGRAPHS.

“Your *hands*, your *hands*, my countrymen.”

VIRGINIUS.

IT is one of the vulgar errors to believe that to be rich and liberal is the only requisite to become the “veritable Amphitryon;” but those who have weighed the matter, and reflected on the qualities that are indispensable to merit this title, will soon be convinced that a good Amphitryon is a *rara avis*. True it is, that with money, a first rate *chef de*

cuisine, — a clever butler, and “ all appliances and means to boot” which constitute a good table, a good dinner may be accomplished ; but it will prove a very tedious and insipid repast, if the host has not the talent of as well selecting his guests as his viands, and as well arranging them.

It was one of the public days at Avesford Priory, and a large party of the neighbourhood was assembled—a heterogeneous mass had been invited, and were commingled in the drawing-room. That universally admitted empty, tedious half hour before dinner seemed most especially irksome on this occasion. The party consisted of thirty. At last dinner was announced, and the General led the way, making use of that oft quoted line, “ Stand not on the order of your going, but go ! ” Dudley was coming forward to offer his arm to Lady Atherley, when a young country squire, dressed in the most *outré* fashion of London exquisiteness, with rings, brooches, gold chains,

most redolent of perfume, and whose ideas of high life were borrowed from the coffee-room of Fladong's, approached—and with a “May I have the honour, Mem?” carried away the prize. Constance’s patience was rather put to the test. On one side, the Bond-street lounger (now happily the race is almost as extinct as the street), and on the other, an elderly gentleman, extremely deaf, and thinking everybody possessed of his own infirmity, bellowed most loudly the few remarks he ventured to offer. Of course, the conversation began *à l’anglaise*, in remarks upon, and admissions of, the state of the weather; and Constance stood a cross fire.

“Beautiful day,” cried the deaf gentleman.

“Oh, very!” responded the exquisite, smoothing his incipient whiskers; “a little too cold.”

“Rather! Any news in town?”

“None.”

“Fine place, this Mem,” said the young squire to Constance,—who, giving a monosyl-

lasic reply, was relieved from all further conversation ; the exquisite thinking, that there was no such uphill heart-breaking labour as that of talking to an impenetrably-repulsing person. The old gentleman did not presume to speak to her, not having been formally inducted into an acquaintanceship. How well is this English feeling characterised in a French piece, where a man at the risk of his own life, saves a lady's.

“Have you thanked your deliverer?” asks her guardian.

“Oh, no, Uncle, you know I have never yet been properly introduced to him.”

Among the other guests were members of parliament, divines, officers, magistrates, bankers, merchants, poets, amateur authors, and medical men. The senator was placed next to the merchant ; the learned judge next to the young ensign ; a celebrated divine found himself seated between a poet and an amateur author.

The author attempted to speak of his last tragedy (which had been unmercifully damned,) to the divine, who tried to turn the subject to his last charity sermon, through which he had been giving a similar fate to a bevy of terrified bumpkins, and who comprehended nothing of the intrigues and cancan of the *coulisses*. The M. P. commenced a discussion with a West Indian proprietor on the subject of the Emancipation Bill, who answered him by the “stagnation of trade” in the sugar market; and black slave against brown sugar, and half cast liberty against best white lump,—kept up a skirmish between political rights and grocerial interests. The banker enlightened the young officer by conversing about the affairs on “Change,” on commerce,—his respective gains and losses, and who were good, and who not; while the flagbearer, in return, enlightened him with “standing orders,” regimental affairs and military movements; interspersed with anecdotes of “Smith, Jones and Thomp-

son" of "ours," and practical pleasantries of the mess-room. The military man was describing to the judge an *affaire de cœur* with a little milliner, which was not very unlikely to come in a judicial shape before the learned pundit. Indeed, the conversation instead of being general, sensible, and attractive, was "a thing of shreds and patches," a Babylonian confusion of tongues.

The dinner passed away; the dessert succeeded; Constance listened with patience to the every-day remarks,—dull repetitions,—old news, and heavy pointless jokes. At last that freemasonry, which ladies so well understand, took place; and the gentlemen, after one chorus scrape of the chairs, and a simultaneous rustle of dresses, were left to themselves,—an additional stimulus to stupidity.

The gentlemen at length came into the drawing-room: whist parties were made up. Constance did duty at the piano forte for half an hour, when a young lady of "great

talent, quite untaught,—a natural genius," as her friends pronounced her to be,—relied her.

Dudley now approached Lady Atherley, who, welcoming him with a smile, made room for him on a sofa; "I have often promised to show you my scrap-book, but you must not be satirical. I know how severe you are, on albums and autograph hunters."

"Indeed, Lady Atherley, you wrong me. I own I have a horror of that refuge for the destitute poets,—an album ! with their lines to memory, hopes, farewells, trophies, joys, sorrows, meetings, suns, stars, tears and smiles."

"Do you remember the description of an album in *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin*, 'La confusion des langues n'était pas plus complète à la tour de Babel. Figurez vous du Français, du Latin, du Chinois, des dessins, des vers, de la musique, de la prose, voire même de l'algèbre, enfouis pêle-mêle dans le même recueil.'"

“ But the letters, nay, even signatures of celebrated people are most interesting,” replied Dudley ; “ as witness this, (turning to a letter signed ‘ Wellington,’) whose name will live for ever.”— It was a mere order to Bicknell for a hat to be sent post to him in Spain.—“ And yet Cyprus and Babylon, Alexander and the Granicus, Hannibal and Cannæ, the brilliant victories of Cæsar, the triumphs of Augustus, the conquests of Charlemagne, the Crusaders and Ascalon, Charles of Sweden and Pultowa, Marlborough and Blenheim, Napoleon, Marengo and Austerlitz ; — all swarm around this one name, to be associated or contrasted with it ; ‘ Wellington and Waterloo ! ’ ”

“ You speak enthusiastically of the hero,” said Lady Atherley ; “ but he must be dear to all English hearts.”

Dudley gazed, and passed on. “ Here is one,” he again said, “ that disproves what Rasselias said to Imlac, after he had been enumerating the numberless qualities necessary

to the perfection of the poetic art. ‘Enough ! thou hast convinced me that no human being can ever be a poet.’ Walter Scott ! the Shakspeare of our time, the mighty master, the magician of the north ; at once the historian, poet, novelist ! What can exceed the description of the escape from Lochleven—the effect and spirit with which it is given ? the whole mustering and march to Langside, as well as the battle itself, are full of life and colouring !’

“Here is one of John Milton,” said Lady Atherley. “No one can peruse *Paradise Lost* without a deep sense of the purity and grandeur of Milton’s soul.”

“Granted,” said Dudley ; “and here is one of Byron ; a letter to his Mary. Misunderstood, calumniated Byron ! what can exceed the union of sublime, passionate, and imaginative thought, which embodies all his poems ? He ‘possesses an empire over the heart, and leads the passions captive !’” And here Dudley broke

out into an under recital of the following lines—

“And if my voice break forth, ’t is not that now
I shrink from what is suffered : let him speak
Who hath beheld decline upon my brow,
Or seen my mind’s convulsion leave it weak ;
But in this page a record will I seek.
Not in the air shall these my words disperse,
Tho’ I be ashes ; a far hour shall wreak
The deep prophetic fulness of this verse,
And pile on human heads the mountain of my curse !
That curse shall be forgiveness !”

“Coleridge too ! and I see you have added what he says on poetry. ‘The poetry of the imagination, although it may glitter more, is neither so rich nor so glorious as the poetry of the heart. We have very few poets of the latter description. In childhood, and sometimes in youth we are alive to the poetry of the heart. While the mind is still pure and artless, devoid of every thing that can be termed sinful—free from anxious and corroding care—all nature appears to us very much as Eden appeared to our first parents.

“ ‘ Everything upon which we gaze seems to be good, and lovely, and beautiful. Our hearts claim acquaintance with all that meets the eye, and we feel deeply impressed by every little event which takes place around us. To such poetry as this the beautiful inhabitants of another world are no doubt awake; and as they touch their golden harps, their living souls seem to leap along the strings and float on the harmonious notes, as they rise like incense to the Great Fountain of love and joy. In this world, poetry does not always mingle with devotion, though I believe that a poetic soul is generally impressed more easily with devout sentiments than those minds which are of a more earthly cast.’ ”

“ But I believe that, in the world to come, poetry and devotion become melted into one,—that we are rendered keenly and acutely sensitive to all with which we hold intercourse; and thus our bliss becomes heightened into continued rapture. Indeed the representations of

Heaven which we have in the Scriptures appear to favour such an opinion.

“Wordsworth! a poet of your own!

‘One who ne’er ventured for a Delphic crown,
To sue the God; but, haunting your green shade
All seasons through, is humbly pleased to braid
Ground flowers, beneath your guardianship self sown.’

“Aye here,” said Dudley, “we have treasures — treasures indeed! Gibbon and Voltaire’s correspondence at Ferney, when the former would intrude on the privacy of the latter.

“MONSIEUR,

“Don Quichotte prenait des
Auberges pour des châteaux,
Mais vous,—vous prenez mon
Château pour une auberge.

“VOLTAIRE.”

The reply too of Gibbon:—

“En ces lieux Je comptais voir le Dieu du génie
L’entendre, lui parler, et m’instruire en tout point;
Mais, comme Lucullus, auquel Je porte envie,
Chez vous on boit, on mange, et l’on ne vous voit point!

“GIBBON.”

“ Afterwards these two became good friends,” said Dudley; “and *apropos* of friends, Voltaire’s idea was not a bad one : ‘*J’ai trois sortes d’amis, les amis qui m’aiment, les amis a qui je suis indifférent, et les amis que me détestent.*’” I rather think he had ‘*a preserve,*’ of the latter ! Boccacio ! good indeed. What can exceed his *naïveté*; the sweetness of his periods ; the natural grace of his manner!—and here is Ariosto too ! What a glory to any country to have produced two such poets, as he and Tasso were, with only eleven years between the death of the first and birth of the second ! What can exceed the portrait of Angelica of the former ? His style, gay, tender, majestic, energetic, sublime—Ah, Tasso ! what majesty, beauty, and grace radiate from every page of this immortal poet.”

“ You have turned over two pages,” said Lady Atherley, anxious not to lose a comment from the lips of her enthusiastic companion. “ We had nearly missed *this,*” continued Lady

Atherley; “Nelson’s last prayer, written on board the Victory.”

“How painfully interesting!” sighed Dudley.
“What a strange picture of piety, confidence as to Victory,—mercy and patriotism !

‘May the great God, whom I worship, grant to my country, for the benefit of Europe, a great and glorious victory!—and may no misconduct in any one tarnish it!—and may *humanity after victory* be the predominant feature in the British fleet! For myself, individually, I commit my life to Him who made me, and may His blessing light upon my endeavours for serving my country faithfully! To him I resign myself, and the just cause which is entrusted to me to defend. Amen! amen! amen!

‘Victory, October 21st, 1805,
in sight of the combined
fleets of France and Spain,
distant about ten miles.’

“I never saw a more interesting collection,”

remarked Dudley, closing the book. “ The signatures alone are of great interest, but the letters are surpassingly so, for they show the minds of the writers; and, as letters have no other object than to communicate our thoughts and sentiments to absent persons, it is a conversation in writing ; and thus the style of letters ought to be the same as that of common conversation, with more choice in the subjects, and more correctness in the phraseology. The rapidity of speech causes many negligences to be overlooked, which the mind over the pen has time to reject, be it ever so rapidly employed ; and he too who listens, is more indulgent than he who reads.”

“ True, true,” replied Lady Atherley ; “ the essential character of epistolary style would appear to be the natural, the refined and the easy. And why is it then, that women with cultivated minds write better letters than men ? ”

“ It is because nature has bestowed upon them

more pliancy of fancy, more vivacity and ready thought, more flexibility of imagination, more delicate discrimination." Dudley seemed drawing his pictures from the features and "the mind, the music breathing from the face," before him.—"Female sensibility is more alert," continued he; "more lively; and women naturally express themselves with more facility than men. The reserve which their education and manners prescribe them, often inspires them with more softened and delicate turns; in fine, their thoughts participate less of reflection, their opinions are more connected with their sentiments; and thence that variety which is usually found in their letters,—that graceful facility of passing from one subject to another without effort; those expressions and associations of words, happily married at the moment; and that careless and nice negligence, 'more pleasing than exactness.'"

Here the conversation was broken in upon,

for at this moment the carriages were announced, and the whole thirty went through the ceremony of shaking hands, and wishing good night to all the remaining party. What a climax to the poetry Dudley had indulged in !

CHAPTER II.

ELECTION.

A Candidate is a most partikilar polite man, a noddin' here, and a bowin' there, and a shakin' hands all round. Nothin' improves a man's manners like an election. *The dancin' master's abroad then.* Nothin' gives the paces equal to that; it makes them as squirmey as an eel; they cross hands and back agin, set to their partners, and right and left in great style, and slick it off at the eend with a rael, complete bow, and a smile for all the world as sweet as a cat makes at a pan of new milk; then they get as full of compliments as a dog is full of fleas, inquirin' how the old lady is at home, and the little boy that made such a wonderful smart answer, they never can forget it till next time.

SAM SLICK.

ELECTOR. "Well, Mr. Sheridan, I'm happy to hear we are going to have a reform in the House of Commons?"

MR. SHERIDAN. "Why, yes, my man, they talk of it."

ELECTOR. "And not before it's wanted. Why, Mr. Sheridan, they *do* tell me there are some boroughs where poor fellows get nothing at all for their votes. Now that ought to be looked into, and *thoroughly reformed*."

MS. Anecdote of Sheridan, at Stafford.

ONE of the best suburban houses in Rat-borough belonged, as is generally the case in all country towns and villages,—to the lawyer;—a red brick house, a slight piece of canvass, propped on slight deal sticks,—nicknamed Veranda—a small strip of garden, a row of Lombardy poplars, like “two files of sodgers, with fixt baganats,” as the Clockmaker says,—with a gaudy plantation of tulips, pinks, and sunflowers; a carriage-sweep, with a large white swing gate at each end,—make up the house of the attorney.

“Low paled in front, and shrubbed with laurels in,
That sometimes flourish higher than your chin;
Here modest ostentation sticks a plate,
Or daubs Egyptian letters on the gate,
Informing passengers ‘t is Cowslip Cot,
Or Woodbine Lodge, or Mr. Pummock’s grot.”

A grass-green painted door, a brass knocker, and a brass-plate, with “FANGLEY, Attorney at Law!” in large letters engraved thereon, were the outward signs of the greatness and grandeur of this man of strife and might.

The interior was no less striking. The front parlour was fitted up as an office for the clerks; the other as the sanctum sanctorum of the mighty oracle. Here were sundry “insignia legalia,” calculated to inspire awe. Over the fire-place, was a large engraving, framed and glazed, of the County Gaol and House of Correction; with their grated windows, iron doors, and ornaments of fetters and chains; over these pictures was looped an impracticable blunderbuss. On each side of this cheering object were hung scores of slips of parchment, vulgarly known by the name of writs; the names of gentlemen in the commission of the peace, tables of terms and returns, sittings in Lincoln’s Inn and Westminster; circuits of

the judges, lists of the sheriffs, notices of quarter sessions, with various other formulæ, all bespeaking Mr. Fangleys' avocation ; while piles of empty deal boxes,—like Romeo's apothecary's “beggarly account,”—on which were painted in large letters, “**DEEDS, BONDS, LEASES, PAPERS, 1769 to 1814** ; trustees of the Pugsley Charity ;” the names of a few noblemen and gentlemen of the neighbourhood, in large gold letters, furnished the room.

On the table were Burns' Justice, and certain “tape-tied parcels never meant *to draw*.” The most imposing object was Mr. Josias Fangleys himself, town-clerk, &c. &c., of Ratborough. He was a man of small stature, neatly proportioned, with a most flexible countenance, made either for frowning, brow-beating, cringing, or conciliating at pleasure. He was about forty years old,—a great tyrant in his little way, a compound of arrogance, ignorance, selfishness, and conceit. He had a tendency

to corpulency just at the termination of the waistcoat : he invariably wore a black coat and vest, “ continuations of the same,” had a quick black eye and a shining bald head. His face was seared with the small-pox, and the throttling tightness of a white stock threw into his cheeks a hue of health, which was very imposing : he was a walking accumulation of law points —could discourse for hours on parish practice, settlements, tithes, enclosures, &c. &c.

“ Any letters ? ” inquired this important legal functionary, addressing a red-faced gentleman in tortoise-shell spectacles—the head clerk.

“ Yes sir,” giving a packet at the same time.

“ What’s this ? ” said Mr. Fangley, opening a black-edged letter. “ Why this is from Digby, our member’s solicitor ; ” he had scarcely read two lines, when he impatiently called for his hat and cane. “ Return at twelve ! ” was left on his own door.

The mayor and corporation of Ratborough

had assembled in solemn council to settle the important affairs of that ancient and loyal borough, when their deliberations were disturbed by the hasty entrance of Mr. Josias Fangley, the town-clerk; that distinguished gentleman seemed “pregnant with news,” and, after puffing and blowing for some minutes like a grampus, he endeavoured to put on a lachrymose face as he announced the momentous and serious intelligence of the sudden demise of Mr. Oldfield, the member for the borough. Astonishment mingled with prompt regret, prevailed; the corporate body looked grave, stared all over at itself,—and delivered itself (after much pain of labour) of the following ejaculations:—“It was a most unexpected event. Such a loss to the country! So excellent a member! fifty years their tried and faithful representative! No accounts undischarged! Only seventy-four years of age! Only always laid up with the gout! What could have killed the old gentleman! Cut off

so suddenly ! No other dissolution near ! Last election so recent ! ”

After a few preparatory hemis Mr. Alderman Binks rose, and, paying a brief and proper tribute to the memory of the departed member, expatiated on “ the important duties they were now called upon to perform, duties which he felt they would discharge faithfully, by vindicating their rights and asserting their dignity as men and citizens.” In conclusion, he begged to propose that a deputation should wait upon General Dunbar, to ascertain his views as to a fit and proper person to represent their interests in Parliament ; the proposition was received with cheers, and seconded in a faint whisper by Mr. Alderman Dibble, the only dissenting voice being that of Mr. Grindlaw. This gentleman was by profession a solicitor, and for some years had been the leader of the opposition party ; by his cunning craft, he had kept in awe many of the worthy inhabitants, and as “ a friend to the people,” and an enemy to all

sinecures and placemen (though be it said *en passant* his father was a pensioner, for no other ostensible reason, than having written a panegyric on a minister of the day), he had obtained great popularity with the mob, who shouted “Grindlaw for ever!” whenever he made his appearance in the streets of Rat-borough, at any feverish period. A retainer from a briefless barrister in London, who gloried in the euphonious soul-stirring appellation of Hampden Stubbs, and was a sort of perambulating politician, gave the bustling solicitor a golden dream of hope that he might be induced to come forward on the independent interest.

Mr. Grindlaw, therefore, immediately retired from the court to dispatch a messenger to the above-mentioned patriot, calling upon him, if he had a spark of public spirit, to lose no time in issuing an address to the worthy and independent electors, emancipating them

from the shackles of a purse-proud oligarchy. Hampden Stubbs was not unknown in Rat-borough ; he was by nature formed to shine as a popular orator ; he was a thorough master of clap-trap and invective, not strictly logical, though, perhaps, sufficiently so for the majority of his auditors. His speeches were masterly appeals to the passions ; his bold undaunted manner, his unequalled volubility, his energetic style, irresistibly impressed the minds of the people with the conviction that he was their disinterested friend, and won from them their applause and admiration. He had pledged himself to vote for slave emancipation, for the abolition of the malt-tax, the house and window tax, the duties upon salt, tea, soap, hops, — for the reduction of the “standing army” and navy,— the total abolition of the bishoprics and House of Lords,—for universal suffrage, ballot, and for the repeal of the union ; for an entire white-washing of the national debt and pension list ; in short, to use an Ameri-

canism, “he went the whole hog.” No debt, no taxes, no lords, no bishops, *no nothing!* Having lost all his property by gambling, and being over head and ears in debt, he was, with the fear of imprisonment before his mind, most anxious to get *a seat* at any rate. He had written several political pamphlets on parliamentary reform, and had, on a former occasion, (to use his own words,) “made an attempt to rescue the town from its degrading servility.” This patriotic conduct had unfortunately been only rewarded by thirty votes. “Ingratitude, thy name is Ratborough!”

In the absence of Mr. Grindlaw, the mayor’s proposition was carried “*nem. con.*;” and preparations were made for putting it into execution. It was about two o’clock,—just as the party at Avesford Priory had finished their luncheon—when a cavalcade was seen slowly advancing through the long line of carriage-road, winding through the domain; it consisted of two crazy glass-coaches, an old

fashioned looking chariot, a small open four-wheeled phaeton, and a large specimen of the blue-bottle tribe, in the shape of a huge indigo looking one-horse fly, the rate of whose progress greatly belied its name.

“Who can it be? what can it mean?” exclaimed Mrs. Dunbar. Some neighbourly visit was the conclusion of many.

“The mayor and corporation of Ratborough coming to offer the freedom of their borough, in a gold snuff-box, to Ravensworth, for his gallant services,” replied the General.

At this moment a faint blush came over Constance. Dudley observed it. After a few idle conjectures, and a few minutes to elucidate their truth, all could perceive that the mysterious vehicles belonged to the ancient corporation of Ratborough; but the announcement and entrance of the worthy burghers put an end to further remarks.

The mayor and corporate body being duly ushered in, Mr. Alderman Binks, a man majestic

enough on ordinary occasions, but now, with his scarlet gown and gold chain, swelling with pride, and looking “as burly as a Sunday beadle when he has kicked down the unhallowed stall of a profane old apple-woman ;” Mr. Alderman Dibble ex-mayor ; the recorder, Counsellor Wheezle ; Messrs. Hoskins, Budd, Smith, Brown, Leeky, Crickitt, and Jubb ; and last, though not least in his own estimation, the town clerk, Mr. Josias Fangley, smirking and smiling, followed one another. It was a real corporate sight, and did Ratborough honour. The mayor opened the proceedings. He recapitulated the events of their morning conference, and, in conclusion, requested the General to come forward himself, or name an individual “ who, at this important crisis, would stand forth to represent their venerable borough in Parliament.”

It would be tedious to repeat the compliments that passed on this occasion ; the talents and virtues of the mayor, the dignity and unimpeachable integrity of the recorder, the bland

and courteous manner of the town clerk, the moral worth and independence of the common council, received the highest encomiums. The General, turning over in his mind the *agrémens* of a contested election, the bribery petition, another election, and the ruinous expense,—declined the invitation for himself ; but it was finally agreed that Dudley should be nominated. For some time he hesitated to become the nominee of the corporation ; but, as he had openly stated his views, which, though toryish, were not illiberal, and as his Parliamentary conduct was to be unfettered, his scruples vanished, and he consented “ to fret his hour on the political stage.”

There is no time at which human rationality appears at so low an ebb as during an election ; every effort is made to get the better of the simple, pure common sense of mankind. It would appear that the popular voice was only to be conciliated by flattery and deception, and that any illusive jargon or nonsense was good

enough to be crammed down the throats of the people; whereas, in point of fact, the people are more cool, reflecting, and independent in their judgments than the absurdities addressed to them would lead one to suppose. They may occasionally be carried away by sophistry, and excited into turbulence, by the false representations of demagogues and designing men ; but they will eventually rally round those who are too upright to truckle to vulgar clamour or popularity, and who, by sincere and friendly counsel, will study their interests, instruct their opinions, and advocate their rights and liberties. In our day, the general diffusion of education and the dissemination of useful knowledge have ameliorated the mental and social condition of the humbler classes, elevated their tastes, and advanced their moral and intellectual powers ; and even in the period of which we write, when the world seemed, to all appearance, in a mental state of stupor—taking things as they found them — and making no exertion

to remedy *any* evil, however glaring, intelligence was the characteristic of many individuals whom the world were apt to slight, on account of their not possessing the distinction of wealth and position.

The usually peaceful borough of Ratborough now began to assume an appearance of activity and bustle; the writ was issued, and a day, not far distant, named for the election of a burgess to serve in parliament. Nothing but the approaching contest was spoken of; the most preponderating mural inscriptions were “Stubbs and independence!” “Vote for Stubbs, the poor man’s friend!” “Ratborough’s pride and England’s glory!” “Hampden Stubbs!” “No Ravensworth, no boroughmongers!” The butchers’ and bakers’ boys were screaming out to the tune of “Hurrah for the Bonnets of blue,” a song, the burthen of which ran as follows:

“Hampden Stubbs, then, we’ll still be with you,
Intruders, we bid you adieu!

Our Hampden 's the man, who has wisdom to scan,
And sever the false from the true ;
For Ratborough, hip, hip, hurrah !
And for Hampden her advocate true !
The law we 'll obey ; it is Freedom's best stay,
So now raise the banner of blue !"

The canvassing began ; nothing could exceed the urbanity and politeness of the candidates towards their possible constituents. The men were "old-fellowed," and grasped by the hand ; their "better halves" coaxed and wheedled amidst the most tender inquiries after their darling progenies, whose teethings were discussed ; the soothing system, or rather sirup, was tried. "Permit me to send a bottle of Mrs. Johnson's real blessing to mothers," said the patriot Stubbs ; their dear little heads were patted, ribbons were distributed ; dinner and tea-parties for the ladies, with French cream, *id est*, "eau de vie," were suggested ; and not a few "goldfinches" with five or ten golden eggs, were pressed upon the wavering voters of this independent borough.

The day — the important day, big with the fate of Ratborough, arrived, and was ushered in by the ringing of bells ; the hustings were raised in the centre of the market-place ; at an early hour a multitude of people, with the colours of the respective candidates, took up their station, shouting and vociferating the names of those to whom they were friendlily disposed. Dudley Ravensworth, in his chariot and four, was loudly welcomed by the Orange party ; whilst the patriot, Hampden Stubbs, Esq., in an open yellow barouche, decorated with laurels and light blue ribbons, was received with the acclamations of the mighty unwashed.

The preliminary matters having been gone through, General Dunbar rose, and after entering at some length into the claims of the candidate he was about to propose, and who, though a Tory, was disposed to advocate the real liberties of the subject, concluded by this exhortation ; — “ Beware of those who, under the mask of friendship and the cloak of great

zeal for their country's welfare, would artfully avail themselves of your suffrages ; and by your own precipitated assistance procure your own undoing ! Let every elector solemnly and candidly judge for himself, (laying aside all personal prejudice or favour,) whether the principles of the Independents, as they designate themselves, are not calculated to introduce anarchy and confusion ; and until they have convinced us, that they are friends to, and zealous supporters of, the religion and liberties of their country, under the present happy establishment, let us heartily, cheerfully, and unanimously concur for the candidate I have now the honour of proposing—Dudley Ravensworth, Esq., as the most proper person to represent this borough in parliament, notwithstanding all that spirited envy or wanton malice have done to lessen his popularity or defame his reputation."

Mr. Alderman Leeky briefly seconded the nomination, in the course of which he took an

opportunity of throwing a little dirt at his adversaries, especially at Mr. Pennicoate, whom he described as a coarse brawler, a mendacious mendicant, a man without a single *shred* of honest fame to *patch* or cover the gross deformity of his private or public character. Now Mr. Pennicoate was the Rat-borough Stultz, and had had a serious quarrel with the corporation; who, in consequence, had taken away their custom. He had, therefore, now, according to the wags, “turned his own coat,” and looked more to “*measures*” than “men.” He, at the conclusion of the alderman’s speech, rose to explain, but was, as many great orators have been before him, “inaudible in the gallery.”

Mr. Grindlaw rose, and with a stentorian voice delivered himself of the following harangue: “You have now, brother freemen, a glorious opportunity of prevailing over the arbitrary dictates of men in power—of defeating the fatal effects of corrupt influence, and of

emancipating yourselves from the tyrannical thraldom of those who would trample upon the most sacred privileges of free-born Englishmen ! Yes ! fellow-countrymen ! like the burning cross of Malise,

‘Vich-Alpine’s summons to his clan,’

the patriotic flame of reform will pass through the island, and an army of free men spring up, unequalled in the history of the world !

‘When flits this cross from man to man,

* * * *

Burst be the ear that fails to heed !

Palsied the foot that shuns to speed !’

“ I see a gleam of sunshine,—the spark of liberty ascends,—let us fan the flame ! Can any man imagine that this borough is concerned only in the event ? No ! brother electors ! your country is concerned ; her eyes are upon you ! Nations are looking upon Ratborough ! Is this then a time to look unconcernedly on an event of the most vital importance ?—an event which may pro-

bably be the crisis of the nation's fate ! If then you have any regard for the welfare of your country,—if any regard for yourselves or families,—any concern for your civil or religious rights,—any love for the world's domestic hearths,—now is the time to convince Europe ! —aye, — Asia ! — Africa ! — (the crucible of slaves !) that we dare be free ! that we will not truckle to those in power, or bend our knee to our country's tyrants !

“Freemen of Ratborough, let us have the proud satisfaction of being the glorious means of putting a check to principles and practices the most destructive to human society !—In conclusion, I beg to propose Hampden Stubbs Esq. as a fit and proper person to represent you in Parliament.”

This speech set the rabble in an uproar, and was loudly cheered by the “blues,” and as loudly groaned at by the opposing Oranges.

“No Grindlaw !” “Who fed the poor on bone-soup ?” “No skilly.” “Who refused

to subscribe to the hospital ? ” “ Why—Grindlaw ;” which called forth the following very trite and true remark from the accused gentleman : “ I am here politically ; I have nothing to do with the ostentations of charity ; what I give, or *ever* have given, is *nothing* to *nobody*.” At this a whole park of electioneering artillery, consisting of cabbage stalks, brickbats, broken bottles, rotten eggs, and pebbles, was discharged at the worthy alderman’s pericranium, and that boiling patriot had all the martyrdom of the pillory for a few minutes, without having (on conviction) legally earned it.

The worthy *schneider*, Mr. Pennicoate, to whom we have already alluded, rose to second the nomination. “ Liberty and freedom, gentlemen ! is the birthright of every Englishman ; and liberty, gentlemen, is nothing without the concomitancy of freedom. But, gentlemen, what is liberty ? what is freedom ? when both can be controlled by power. Liberty, gentlemen, is a plant.”

"And so is a cabbage," exclaimed an unwashed artificer, suiting the action to the word, and hurling a fine specimen of the vegetable of the drum-head species at the head of the worthy Tailor-Brutus.

The latter, cut off in the thread of his discourse, sat or rather squatted down amidst the cries of "Snip!" "Remnant!" "Shreds and Patches!" "Shopboard, why don't you stand up and rest?" raised by the "Oranges."

Mr. Glozer, the editor of the "Liberal," now got up, and after the fashion of the country manager, who, on finding the young gentleman who was to enact the ill-fated son of Douglas, so frightened that he could not bear the sight of Glenarvon or his mother,—came forward and pronounced *for* him (holding his trembling hand at the foot-lights,) "This young gentleman's name is Norval; On the Grampian hills his father feeds his flocks, &c." So Mr. Glozer briefly seconded what his friend had intended to have done, the nomination of Mr. Hampden

Stubbs as a fit and proper person to represent the borough; and he did very much, as if Mr. Rowland had prevailed upon him to use his Macassar upon the heads of the people beneath him. In vain the candidates attempted to obtain a hearing. “Down with corruption!” “Stubbs for ever!” “Freedom, and Old England,” shouted the liberal mob; and so liberally had “secret service” money been distributed in the humble muddling form of beer-money,—that the independent cry prevailed. A hundred ragged rascals shouted in full chorus, “Stubbs, the people’s choice!” The electors then approached the polling books, and gave their unbiassed suffrages,—receiving the thanks of the candidates, and the more substantial ones of their agents in the shape of “refreshment tickets,” or, as they were called in Ratborough, “orders for *mint sauce*.”

No event worth recording occurred, except the perseverance of an “*unbought freeman*,” who, on being asked for whom he voted,

replied, “*ploomper* for corporation candidate.”

“ You must name the gentleman,” said the obsequious town clerk.

“ Doan’t know he ; corporation candidate.”

“ I will read the names,” simpered Mr. Josias Fangley, which he accordingly did, laying a great stress on that of Mr. Ravensworth, and accompanying it with a knowing wink.

“ That ’s he ! corporation candidate. I votes for he !” then, stroking down his hair, exclaimed, “ It ’s all right, Mr. Fangley ; I looks to you for the moony.”

“ Stand down !” ejaculated his worshipful.

“ Room for the voters !” responded Fangley.

“ Honour among thieves, Mr. Fangley. I looks to you for the moony !”

The poll books were closed at four o’clock, and the numbers shortly after declared were.

DUDLEY RAVENSWORTH, Esq., 230.

HAMPDEN STUBBS, Esq., 43 (29 doubtful).

The latter looked a perfect picture of *resignation*; whereupon Dudley Ravensworth was declared duly elected. The successful candidate then returned thanks in a “neat and appropriate;” and the unsuccessful one, vented his spleen in a long harangue, the principal topics of which were, “Corruption, emancipation, purity of election, proud oligarchy, and rights of free-born Englishmen.” The chosen representative was then, with becoming ceremony, chaired through the town, amidst the usual concomitants—flags streaming, colours fluttering, bells ringing, men bawling, women shouting and waving their handkerchiefs and blessing his handsome face, taps running, and, after a ricketty service of danger and popularity, the elected was landed safely at “The Lamb,” where the free and independent electors were to betake of a sumptuous repast.

At the upper end of the room a platform had been raised, at which the newly-elected member was to preside, supported by his friends; the

chair was decorated with laurel leaves, orange ribbons, banners hung from the gallery, (in which “the band,” as it was called, *par excellence*, was placed.) At five o’clock the dinner was announced. This elegant entertainment consisted of cold fish, lean tough chickens, that seemed to have been running about town during the whole election, rusty hams, canvass-backed old ducks, raw venison, stale game, sour fruit, and grapeless wine, not to forget soiled table-cloths, steel forks, rush-bottomed chairs, and unbefitting tables. The smell of a stable over which the room was built, the savoury scent of the neighbouring kitchen, the fumes of the tallow candles, rack punch, and strong tobacco, dispersed over the whole house,—contended with equal power for superiority, and proved a great treat to all olfactory senses; as did the chattering of tongues, the clattering of plates, knives and forks, the jingling of glasses, the heavy tread of awkward boobies, of ostler waiters, and the noise of the band,

—two spasmodic clarionets, a shrivelled-skinned big drum, and a relaxed violin — to the auricular senses. The cloth was removed, and *Non nobis* sung ; then there were the usual toasts, the usual speeches, the usual noise ; toast followed toast, cheer succeeded cheer ; corruption was denounced, patriotism extolled : songs, glees, catches, yells, and shrieks concluded the day. Much disorder and drunkenness did hard duty out of doors ; a few necks and many limbs were broken ; and morning dawned upon Ratborough as a place sacred to headache and heartburn.

CHAPTER III.

DINNER AT SIR J. BIDDLECOMBE'S.

“ To feed, were best at home;
From thence—the sauce to meat is ceremony.”

Macbeth.

“ *Our housekeepers* may think I have been tediously minute on many points, which may appear trifling: my predecessors seem to have considered the *Rudiments of Cookery* quite unworthy of attention. These little delicate distinctions constitute all the difference between a common and an elegant table.”

DR. KITCHENER.

ELIGIBLE FREEHOLD PROPERTY.

THE SALE TO BE PEREMPTORY!

MR. HOOD,

with feelings of unmixed pleasure and satisfaction,
makes known that he is honoured by having been selected
as the

humble individual

to offer for sale by public competition a singularly delightful
Freehold Estate, including

THE PAGODA,

with its beautiful park, studded with majestic timber ;
cultivated lands,

teeming with fertility; extensive woods ;

Eden-like pleasure and flower gardens,

delightfully situate, so as to command the confluence of the
lake with the river Snowford.

The
MANSION HOUSE

is seen nestling under the wings and fostering care of the
surrounding hills,

by which it is delightfully screened from the
importunity of wintry winds ;

and the offices are of the most useful description.

The
WOODLAND SCENERY

is of

SURPASSING BEAUTY.

Luxuriant banks, pleading in their beauteous form at the
foot of the hanging woods.

Perpetual ivy, which entwines and adorns the countless
thousands of forest trees and plants.

VISTAS,
formed by *Nature's hand*;

The
HERMITAGE,

the fishing pond, a valley teeming in wild luxuriance,
the rippling of the waters,
and

pellucid stream gently gliding through the groves ;
the American shrubs,

fresh and green, in little myriads, divesting the winter
months of anything like *ennui*, or discomfort,
complete

a coup d'œil,

that seems to approach

Elysium,

and produce an effect that would be idle to attempt to
describe through this
feeble effort—

“There’s nothing left to fancy’s guess ;
You see that all is loveliness.”

The
P A G O D A

is the great Leviathan of the river Snowford ;
every thing on its banks must yield to its proud supremacy ;
it betops all cotemporaries.

The recreation of shooting and fishing

is an

AUXILIARY

to an extent that few can parallel.

THE MANSION

is suitably furnished, and the appendages in pictures
and

Articles of taste and virtu

give to it a decided superiority over all its neighbouring
rivals.

The gardens

are in beautiful taste, and the *ensemble* is indicative of a

PRINCELY TERRITORY.

To those who are not averse to longevity, throughout the
world it would be in vain to look for a more
congenial climate;

Ninety-four is not considered old, and doctors and physicians
have tried their art in vain, and are few
though eminent.

The constituency of the neighbouring

BOROUGH OF RATBOROUGH

will hail with delight the possessor of
this demesne;

and if his principles be worthy of their suffrages he will
probably

WALK OVER THE COURSE.

The roads in all directions are excellent.

Fox hounds are domiciled in the immediate vicinity.

The parochial rates are LOW.

For particulars, &c.

The above advertisement had appeared in the county papers, and had so captivated Sir John and Lady Biddlecombe (of whom more anon), that they became the purchasers of the Pagoda, at a price which was pronounced by the *eloquent* agent of the vendor, *to the purchaser*, as a mere *bagatelle*; but *to the vendor*, it was vaunted forth as “the effecting a sale upon terms which no other gentleman in the profession could have accomplished.” His per centage amounted to something like five thousand pounds, which, with interest on a deposit received by the vendor himself, amounted to something considerably more. The auctioneer, on being reasoned with, hinted, in his own peculiar broad way, that he had his doubts, considering the style in which the business had been transacted, that the purchase-money ought not to have been shared between himself and the vendor. The demand, after some bickering, was compromised; the auctioneer taking something like

two thousand pounds, for a few days of agreeable travelling, and for the infliction of a few hours of horrid bad English upon his auditors.

A few days after the election, the party at Avesford were to dine with Sir John and Lady Biddlecombe. Sir John had been in early life a most respectable grocer, and had been fortunate enough to have held the office of mayor during the visit of Louis XVIII. on his return to the throne of his ancestors. This claim, added to some political influence which the worthy alderman possessed, was the means of the distinguished honour of knighthood being conferred upon him ; and in consequence of the intimacy with the “illustrious travellers,” Sir John thought it necessary to take half a dozen lessons from a French *émigré*, “just to give him an insight into the language,” and he had picked up from the vocabulary a considerable number of phrases, which he Anglicised in pronunciation, and introduced upon every occasion. He was

the original who was at a loss to find out the French for *blanc-mange*, and the identical individual, who, during his *séjour* at Paris to get in some old out-standing debts, asked for a box on the night *Relâche au Théâtre* was advertised, because he felt assured *Relâche* must be a glorious play to be acted at every theatre?

Sir John and Lady Biddlecombe had paid a visit to Paris *pendant les cent jours*, and their own *lune de miel*; had seen the Tuileries, and “waddled through the Louvre” My lady, in a rose-coloured pelisse, blue bonnet, and a large green parasol, had shocked the sensitive nerves of the *beau monde* in the gardens and *Champs Elysées*; they had strolled to the *Jardin des Plantes* and *Père la Chaise*; had visited St. Cloud and Versailles; had slept over a tragedy at the *Théâtre Français*; had been “jolly mont en-nuwyeed” at the *Variétés*, where they had been *sifflée’d* and *à-bas’d* for turning their backs to the audience, and where they were wholly un-

conscious of their prototypes on the stage in *Les Anglaises pour rire*. They had been dreadfully shocked at the dancers of the opera (my lady sat with her fan to her face during the performance); had dined at the *cafés*, where Sir John abused the waiters, or *garçons* as he called them; ordered beef-steaks and porter; piqued himself upon the right of a free-born Englishman—not to take off his hat on entering; grumbled at the absence of *trottoirs*; laughed at their French gibberish; abused the *John Darms*, and spouted on every occasion—“Angleterre, avec toutes votre fautes, j'aime vous toujours!” Lady Biddlecombe, *née* Jenny Runciman, was the only daughter of a wealthy East Indian, indescribably vulgar from her attempts to ape “gentility.” The wits were not idle on the subject of the lady that had, during the *honeymoon*, added a *plum* to the grocer’s store. Her usual *sobriquet* was the Queen of Candy. Nor did Sir John escape, who, being a staunch Tory, was the object of many politi-

cal squibs. The one that had made the deepest effect was the reply of a Whig editor whom Sir John had designated as a gross libeller :—“ If I am a gross libeller, you are a *grosser*.” Sir John was “*near*”—Anglicè, *stingy*—in business “*dear*;” he was, therefore, called “our nearest and dearest friend.” Lady (Runciman) Biddlecombe—for so she described herself on an enamelled pink card, to use heraldic terms, invected, engrailed, nebuled, and waved, to an alarming extent, was a good-humoured, vulgar, bustling woman, who interspersed her conversation with “When I was in India with my father Runciman, we devoted our time to elephant riding and whist:” hence her card parties were always called “*India rubbers*.” She talked of Hyder Ally and the Nizam, Mahabalipuram, Gungarapettah, Chingleput, Outramalore, Gingee, palanquins, and punkas; she called her garden a compound, her groom, a syce; public-houses, choultries; claret, lott shrob; the post-bag, tappal; and luncheon,

tiffin. Dudley tried to escape the dinner, under the plea of indisposition, but was overruled by the General, who had known the Runcimans at Madras, and who was anxious to increase his political influence by keeping on good terms with the Biddlecombes.

Constance would have given worlds to have stayed away, despite of Lord Atherley's assurance, that the Biddlecombes would give "a capital feed." The dinner went off as such dinners usually do ; there was a party of nineteen at a table that would have held twelve conveniently. Lady Biddlecombe had invited fourteen ; but unluckily an excuse came from Dr. Boyle, saying "an untoward event had called him unexpectedly away to attend a sick lady, but that he should be happy to drop in to tea :" the said doctor having dined off a solitary pork chop, and remained away, to give the Avesford party an idea of his great practice. When the doctor's note arrived, great was the consternation at the Pagoda ; for, as we have

already said, such was the euphonious name of the before-described mansion ;—in plain truth, a modern red brick house, glowing and glaring in the summer sun, with two yew trees in front, one representing a dragon, the other a peacock, interspersed with a few tall groups of Lombardy poplars.

It is true, that in the garden there were sundry hermitages and summer-houses, fit only for Bagnigge Wells, and an oriental cruet-castor looking building, which Lady B. (for so she was always called by Sir John,) described as “a chaste blending of the simple with the ornamental.” The character of the architecture it would be difficult to describe ; the county builder had been nearly ruined by informing a friend of my lady’s, in answer to a question of “to what order of architecture it belonged ?”—“To the late Mr. Grime’s *particular order.*”

In this temple there was an aviary, exceedingly rich in birds ; a parrot, who screeched

“ What’s o’clock, Biddle ?” “ Who are you, Sally ?” and “ How’s Miss Baker ?” two par-rokets, a Virginia nightingale “ *out of song*, ” (as Sir John used to say of his sugars,) and some happy couples of love birds, not on terms.

Passing through this paradise for the ornithologist, you reached the Egyptian pagoda ; here Sir John gave, as he called them, his “ *dejoones à la fore sheet*. ” The interior was filled with mandarins and josses, “ nodding—nid-nid-nodding,” their heads over the chimneys, and executed in very bold basso rilievo ; forms representing extravagant fictions in Hindoo fable, were, according to Lady B., “ noble efforts of human ingenuity, in design and conception unrivalled in modern art, and quite equal to the celebrated temple in the city of the great Bali.” They consisted of elephants, large and small, sacred bulls, alligators, hooded snakes, lions, bungalows, bandicoots, jiggerkhars, mahoots, crocodiles, and fakeers. It was rumoured, that a theatrical

tyro, a scene-painter, (whose benefit the late Mr. Grimes had patronised,) had painted the above crude delineations from a pantomime that had the previous Christmas surprised the metropolis, under the title of “The Raje Ghur Mahiskasur, or Harlequin in India.” Our description of the Pagoda has carried us from our subject.

The doctor’s excuse arrived only three hours before dinner, just as Lady Biddlecombe was fussing about, getting Guava jelly from what she called the press, and arranging her dessert. Sir John was immediately summoned ; Lady B. being as superstitious as a Brahmin, and who would rather have fasted than have sat down *thirteen* to dinner.

“Here ! Sir John !” exclaimed my lady,
“Dr. Boyle has sent an excuse.”

“Dear me !” replied her *sposo*, delighted at having an opportunity of filling up the worthy M.D.’s place, especially on such an occasion, when, to use his own words, the

"nobs," in contradistinction of the *snobs*, were to dine with him. "Who shall we have, Lady B? There's the Sankeys. Mrs. S. is 'horse de combat' in the straw. Then there's the Dobies: young D. has the measles, so probably Mrs. D. would stay 'chaise 'ell;' or the Briggses! Briggs is away."

"Let's kill two birds with one stone, my love," replied Lady Biddlecombe: "out of the six we may safely, at this late hour, only speculate on one or two at most." So, proceeding to her writing-desk, she dispatched invitations to the Sankeys, Dobies, and Briggses, expressing her regret, that, owing to the carelessness of her servants, the notes had been mislaid, and begging they would excuse the shortness of the invitation.

In less than an hour, sundry pink notes were brought to my lady; one from Josias Sankey, expressing his delight at the better late than never invite,—and suggesting that as Mrs. S. was unable to leave her room,—he might be

allowed to bring her maiden sister, Miss Lilliacrap. The Dobies were happy to say Master Samuel was so much better that they should be charmed to wait upon Sir John and Lady Biddlecombe; and Mrs. Briggs congratulated herself that the lateness of the hour (half-past five), would enable her and her better half to avail themselves of their polite attention, as Mr. Briggs was to return by the five o'clock coach. Judge of the consternation—nineteen instead of fourteen at table! Jacob Pilcher, the factotum, was immediately summoned; under his superintendence, a small unpainted deal table from the servants' hall was allowed to be added, (just as a common constituent on a pressing occasion is joined at the same dinner with the lofty candidate,) much to the horror of Sir John,—who piqued himself upon the treacle-coloured brightness of his mahogany. Lady B. pronounced it to be “an excellent make-shift, and though the white cloth (as her ladyship phrased it) could not be removed,

it would look vastly well, and be very French." With the exception of an unfortunate hiatus, or white canal between the "make-shift" and the dining-table, there was no appearance to gainsay Lady Biddlecombe's encomiums.

On the arrival of the Avesford party,— which consisted of the Dunbars, Atherleys, Ravensworth, and Harry Bibury, at a little after six, they found evident symptoms of impatience in the company assembled *in* the drawing-room at the Pagoda. Twice had Sir John been informed that the pastry-cook, who furnished the dinner declared that the soups and pâtés would be destroyed if longer kept back. A loud "Now, Jacob, you may bring up the dinner," showed the annoyance of the worthy knight. Lady Biddlecombe, was what her maid called "beautifully got up" in a crimson velvet dress, ("hot rolls and butter in the middle of July," as Lord Ogleby says), swans'-down boa, a green and silver turban, decorated with a huge bird of Paradise, white

gloves bursting at the knuckles, and scarcely getting an inch over a pair of very scarlet elbows. The introductions then began—“ My son, Master Hastings Moira Cornwallis Biddlecombe !” He was a pale, over-grown, knock-kneed, straight-haired youth, dressed in a very tight sky-blue jacket, ornamented with a row of buttons over each shoulder. Lady Susan and Captain Yellowly, the former a faded sprig of nobility, the latter an officer in the East India company’s service. Mr. and Mrs. Alderman Libby ; Mr. and Mrs. Briggs, Mr. Dobie, who had Joe Miller by heart, and whose mind was an ever-springing fountain of quiddits ; one, who according to Horace,—

“ Fœnum habet in cornu ; longe fuge, dummodo risum
Excutiat sibi, non hic cuiquam parcer amico.”

Mrs. Dobie, Mr. Sankey, Miss Lillicrap, Mr. Quelch, a poet ! the leading article-maker to the county paper, and his niece, Miss Stackpole—the Matilda Lavinia, who filled the “ poet’s

corner" with lines to birds and butterflies, enigmas, anagrams, and rebusses. A special request was made to Mrs. Dunbar to invite the two latter to the next private theatricals; "for Quelch was really a rising poet,—his satire on the Whigs was so pointed, and Miss Stackpole was about to publish "The Nun of Santa Sofia; or, The Horrors of the Inquisition." Quelch, too, would write a critique on the performance. But to the dinner, which was at last announced; the servants being drawn up "in line in the hall, headed by the butler, Mr. Pilcher, a deaf, asthmatic, yellow-faced veteran, who had a nasty trick of coughing on every occasion when he was spoken to, which gave momentary tinges of purple to the otherwise dead saffron of his visage. My lady's footman, Isaac, a tall, gawky, calfless youth of six feet one, who having lately taken the place and liveries of one of smaller growth,—showed a considerable line of debatable land, between his waistcoat and "smalls," and a not incon-

siderable vacuum between his sleeves and hands. Indeed, it may be questioned whether wrists were ever seen to greater advantage. Jem, the coachman, came next, rather redolent of the stable, his shoes creaking, his face shining, his hair well worked down with harness-oil, and shewing two extensive ears, looking like Carlenford oysters, only not so white. Sam, the post-boy, was so cased in leather “oh, no, we never mention ‘ems” that he could hardly move, and had evidently polished his “high-lows” with waterproof harness-black-ing, which gave to the olfactories a most disagreeable assurance of its quality. Last and least came my Lady Biddlecombe’s pretty foot-page, a diminutive, fat, Dutch-built boy, whose simple unsophisticated name, Francis Jones, had been Frenchified into François; he was dressed in a crimson jacket, studded all over with peppermint-drop buttons, a pair of pepper-and-salt trowsers, with a red velvet stripe down them, a pair of “Bluchers” showing a some-

what soiled grey-ribbed worsted stocking. This costume had caused “a tiff” between Sir John and his lady, the latter having been hallooed at in the streets during the last election, when escorted by the urchin. Sun-dry remarks had been thrown out about the shop attire; “pepper-and-salt trowsers;” “peppermint-drop, sugar-loaf buttons,” &c. The company having been wedged into their seats, amidst the hopes of Lady Biddlecombe that they would not be crowded, and the assurances of Sir John that there was “bow-coop de place,” Mr. Quelch, who was a consummate pedant, showed it upon this as on every occasion. The soup gave him the first opportunity of displaying his learning; he expatiated upon the black broth of the Spartans, and quoted all the Lacedæmonians said on the subject. He compared the oratory of a modern M. P. to the vigour and eloquence of Demosthenes,—and brought in the pebbles. He coupled a radical seditious promoter of civil

feuds with the virtues and heroic bravery of Leonidas or Cato. Despite of the little encouragement he met with from his neighbours, he resolved not to quit his favourite topic without a flourish, “ Allow me to take a glass of wine with you, Lady Susan,” he exclaimed ; “ or rather five glasses.”

“ Sir !” responded her ladyship.

“ Yes, five ; for according to Martial, the Roman gallants used to drink as many glasses to their mistress’ health, as there were letters in her name :—

‘ Yes!—let six cups to Naevia’s health go round,
And fair Tustina’s be with seven crowned.’ ”

“ Thank you !” replied the formal Lady Susan ; “ I never drink wine ; I shall, however, have much pleasure in taking a glass of water to your wine.”

“ Water !” replied Quelch. “ As Madame Pompadour said, ‘ Oh, that it were a sin to drink a glass of water, just to give it a relish ! ’ ”

Dudley, who had taken Constance in to dinner, and who unaccustomed to make such a rush, as the lions were wont to do at Exeter Change when the time for feeding came, found himself obliged to deposit Lady Atherley in a vacant seat next to Sir John, and by him was requested to divide the ladies, and pass up to the fire, for the Biddlecombes kept up the Indian hot-bed system, even in summer. To describe Dudley's horror is impossible,—to be obliged to leave her—to sit before a huge fire that would have roasted an ox, with nothing but a small screen, that on every occasion would be knocked over by the movements of the servants,—thermometer up to Calcutta, hot meats reeking on the table,—to be supported on one side by Miss Lillicrap, an antiquated lady who had so oiled her artificial curls that she would have been a good walking puff for Prince's Russian oil; and on the other by Mrs. Dobie,—who having just left her son's sick chamber, had for fear of infection so im-

pregnated herself with camphor, that she might have been supposed to have recently escaped from a Lazaretto. Dudley was so crammed between the two, and squeezed and bored by elbow points through both his sides,—his arms pinioned like a trussed fowl,—that he could hardly move more than sufficiently to extricate a coarse wet napkin from an ivory ring. In his attempt he overturned the salt cellar, filled with a pyramid of pink salt. Lady Biddlecombe's superstition was again roused.

“Pray, Mr. Ravensworth, throw some over your left shoulder;” which request he accordingly complied with, much to the discomfiture of Miss Lillicrap. Misfortunes seldom come singly; no sooner had this *contretemps* taken place, than it was followed by Sam’s tripping over the feet of the screen, and depositing a plate of mock-turtle, with eight very bilious-looking forced meat-balls, (as though a bagatelle board had deposited its yellow treasures)

into Mrs. Dobie's lap. The affair was made worse, by Sam's attempt to wipe off the consequence with a cloth that had, from its turpentine smell, apparently lately seen the neighbourhood of the coach-house. No sooner had Sir John expressed his hope, that Mrs. Dobie had not been scalded,—how she could have been burnt with cold soup, or, as Mr. Dobie whispered, “cold pig,” it is impossible to say,—when a bottle of sparkling champagne broke its wiry bonds, and deluged Captain Yellowly with the juice of the imprisoned spirit of the gooseberry; who was not much reconciled by Mr. Dobie's ill-timed remark, “that a son of Mars ought to be accustomed to stand *grapeshot.*” The dinner, according to the bill of fare, or “cart,” as Sir John, who had translated it into French, called it, consisted of—

2 Potages mock-tortue;—a wretched imitation of the occidental amphibious luxury.

Mullagatawny; the latter, as into it the cook had evidently spilled the whole contents of

the cayenne cruet, would have furnished an excellent first lesson of fire-eating to any modern Chabert.

2 *Poisons*.—So the fish was called, and not inappropriately. A huge turbot hardly boiled, and which the cook had decorated with the arms and crest of the Biddlecombes, done in the lobster's spawn—crest a little too thick; and some mullet *rouge*. These fish had certainly not seen their native element for some days, which, of course, called forth from Dobie an allusion to the delicacy of the *smelt*. A *dindon garni*, the decorations consisting of sundry ornaments cut out of turnips, in the shape of camillas “growing spontaneously.” *Un rôti*, a haunch of venison, which, having been kept a little too long, gave the never-failing punster an opportunity of saying how greatly *mortified* he was—as was the venison—at its being so high. 6 Entrées,—“*a voulez-vous*,” as Sir John called it;—a *vol-au-vent* of oysters;—“some petty patties” *d'homard*—cold,

clammy-looking paste, with what in our days would be called homœopathic bits of lobster in their interior ;—*Langue de bœuf*, a large glazed tongue of elephantine size, perforated with wooden skewers, on which were birds of brilliant plumage, cut out of red carrots and looking like popinjays of the olden time, —here again Dobie, on helping the ladies, introduced his accustomed joke respecting the garrulity of the fairer sex ;—*Cotelettes de porc*; sauce tomato rather cold ;—Pigeons garnis aux choux; tough “blue rocks,” with red cabbage, and decided symptoms of the *Red House*. The second service consisted of lean ducks; stale, tasteless, cartilaginous, sickly-looking sweetbreads; greasy spinage, smoked macaroni; sundry sweets in the shape of baked pears; blanc-manges, and jellies with nosegays in their bosoms; raised pastry, custards, charlottes, &c., &c. Some trifling mistakes occurred at dinner: Jem who had received strict orders to take the lobster sauce

round to every body, acted *au pied de la lettre*, and with one thumb distinctly seen in it, and redder than that in which it was embedded, persevered in carrying it round long after the fish had left the room,—nudging every one, and with a sly wink exclaiming, “Zarce, Zur.” The Guava jelly had taken the place of red currant for the venison. There was also a slight breakage, by Sam’s tripping over the best china, which was being washed at the door. Just as the cloth was removed, and the dessert and ice placed on the table, the cook’s voice was heard loudly at the door, exclaiming, “You’ve forgot the Suffly and Fondoo,—what will Missus say!” Rushing into the room, she deposited upon a sideboard, which was partly hid by a screen, a tray containing the above smoking dishes. The “tea-boy” caught hold of one, which, burning his fingers, he dropped on the floor, splashing Sir John’s claret-coloured coat. The gaunt footman was more fortunate, for seizing the *fondu*, he deposited it, tin case

and all, between the ices in front of the hostess. After some black looks from my Lady, the servants and *fondu* left the room : then began the usual inquiries.

“ How have you dined, Lord Atherley ? ”

“ Oh, capitally, capitally ! ”

“ Dinner been to your liking, General ? — Hope you have taken care of Miss Lillicrap, Mr. Ravensworth ? ”

Dudley’s care of Miss Lillicrap, who had, as she herself declared, “ a sweet tooth,” had been to replenish her plate very often with “ Charlotte Roos,” as she called an ornamental porcupine in cake, studded with almonds, in a frothy sea of Naples soap-looking lather, and considerably impregnated with brandy.

“ Hope you don’t feel the fire, Mr. Dobie ? ”

“ Regularly burnt out,” replied Dobie, *sotto voce*. Master Biddlecombe then made his appearance, and, under the promise of a pear, was called upon to repeat what the King of France had said to him: when, rubbing

his hair down with his right hand, and turning his toes in, with a silly grin he began a running unbroken accompaniment of words, as follows : “ Please, the King of the French, Louis dixhuit, who, by the ambitious tyranny of Bone-parté, was driven from his kingdom, said to me, ‘ Vary pretty boy, très jolly garson’ —but will you give me the pear, now ?” A burst of applause rang through the room ; this precocious Cicero was petted by all, amidst the endearing epithets, “ sweet little creature, darling little love, pretty little dear ;” he was of course super-saturated with wine, cakes, fruit, and ice, by the guests, partly out of kindness, and partly to get rid of his troublesome importunities. The little stuffed specimen showed his gratitude, by inserting his fingers in every sweet dish, and rubbing them on the sleeves of all he came in contact with. Great was the satisfaction of every guest when a very loud “ hem ! ” from the lady president, gave a hint to the ladies to depart ; then

came the searching for gloves, pocket-handkerchiefs, and vinagrettes. Mr. Quelch ran to the door, his poetical-looking eyes in “phrensy rolling.”

“ Fly not yet !” exclaimed the poetaster.

“ At ten we shall summon you to tea,” rejoined Lady Biddlecombe.

“ Ah ! my Lady, as Ovid says, ‘nil sine te.’ ”

The gentlemen then began to make themselves a little comfortable; for the time of which we write was one of hard living, loyal toasts, bacchanalian songs, and brimming bumpers: Father Matthew and teetotalism were then unknown. The hounds, racing, and “ delishos creeshors,” (as Harry Bibury called them,) were the subjects of conversation: the latter had been silent all dinner, in order, as he said, to enable him to make “ running for the plate.” Dobie told his every-day after-dinner joke, which Sir John led up to, and in return Dobie gave the cue to Sir John for

his remarks about Louis dixhuit. As faithful chroniclers, we are bound to give Dobie's *cheval de bataille bon-mot*, as his patron called it, and which consisted of his defending the spelling on a public-house sign, (which he had had purposely painted,) “*bear* sold here,” by assuring the sceptics that *bear* was right, for it evidently meant it was the publican's own *bruin*.

Sir John then begged to call the attention of the company to a “sentiment,” which he felt would be received with as much pleasure as it was given, and drank (*drank* is invariably the word,) with the greatest enthusiasm, — he would not trespass further upon their valuable time, than to mention that during his mayoralty,—and in referring to that time he referred to the happiest period of his life,—he had been honoured with the presence of most illustrious individuals: it would be ‘mauvaise goot’ in him to say more, than that one royal personage, one whose noble

birth was eclipsed by the nobleness of his conduct, and who possessed in his breast a brighter jewel than even sparkled in his regal coronet, had told him that it was the bounden duty of every citizen never to be backward in coming forward to support the King, the Church, the Constitution. He *had* supported his King, he had supported *his*—he meant the Constitution and the Church; he had been born a Tory, he would live a Tory, he would die a Tory, and he now begged to give, with the honours, a sentiment, “ May the wings of Toryism never moult a feather; and may those pure principles that have placed this country on the proudest pinnacle of mundane pre-eminence, burst triumphant forth, spite of the malignant machinations of misguided miscreants, as religion did of old from the ashes of the martyrs !”

This toast, which had been well learned, was delivered with good Birmingham enthusiasm, and received with cheers, huzzas,

hip, hip, hurrahs !—a few of Sir John’s glasses were broken in the confusion of the moment. The bottles were passed ; unfortunately, in Dudley’s abstraction, he passed the train,—for they were all on wheels,—too speedily over the chasm of the make-shift ; all “got off the line,” (to use a *modern* phrase,) and were overturned, giving Dobie an opportunity of singing a line of a then popular song,

“ Flow, thou regal purple stream.”

Coffee, and a *chasse-café* were then brought in. “This oddyvie,” exclaimed Sir John, “has been in the family twenty years ; it belonged to my late lamented and revered father.”

“ What ! *spirit* of thy sainted sire ! ” again exclaimed Dobie, rather to the discomfiture of the host.

Mr. Jacob Pilcher then announced tea in the drawing-room, upon which Sir John, as “was his custom of an afternoon,” begged to be excused for a moment, whilst he gave orders to his groom, which was in reality

to enable his friend Quelch to propose his health in his absence, and which the poet laureate to the Pagoda introduced with a flourish :—“ Gentlemen, as the immortal bard says,

‘ Sit, worthy friends, my Lord is often thus,
And hath been from his youth. Pray you keep seat,
The fit is momentary.’

So let us avail ourselves of the short absence of Sir John Biddlecombe to drink his health—”

“ And many happy returns of this day,” responded Dobie.

At this auspicious moment the worthy knight re-appeared, and in thanking the company for the unexpected,—he might say,—unmerited compliment, jocosely added, “ They had done him the honour of drinking his health in his absence, and he begged, in return, to say that, at this late hour of the evening—the ladies waiting—he should be equally happy to drink theirs in their absence.”

CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUATION OF DINNER. — DUEL.

It has a strange, quick jar upon the ear,
That cocking of a pistol, when you know
A moment more will bring the sight to bear
Upon your person, twelve yards off or so ;
A gentlemanly distance, not too near
If you have got a former friend for foe ;
But after being fired at once or twice,
The ear becomes more Irish, and less nice.

BYRON.

He 'll call you villain — or he 'll call you out.

CRABBE.

ON entering the drawing-room, Dudley evidently saw that some unusual commotion had taken place ; the effects were plainly visible. We must put our readers in possession of the cause : — Doctor Boyle, whom

we have already mentioned, the renowned Galen of the district, and whose name rejoiced in the orthodox appendages of surgeon, apothecary, and man-midwife, — was a most inveterate toper; during his sober intervals, — which were few and far between, — he was hearty, good-humoured, and civil; but when the enemy had stolen away his brains, he became coarse, blustering, and quarrelsome, like Tam O'Shanter—

“ Wi’ tippenny he ’d fear nae evil,
Wi’ usquebae he ’d face the devil.”

On his road to the Pagoda he had stepped in to see a patient,—a tough son of Neptune,—who, preferring the practice of the worthy M.D. to his precept,—was indulging in all the luxuries of a glass of grog, and a mild havannah.

“ Bless me ! ” cried the Doctor, “ what ’s this ? ”

“ Only fumigating my room against contagion, and splicing the main brace, just

to keep the rheumatics off," replied the tar. "But sit down, doctor ; here's to the memory of Nelson !"

The son of Esculapius, nothing loth, filled his glass, and, having drunk many immortal memories, became, in time, a victim to the want of that faculty which he toasted.

Nine o'clock arrived, which was the hour he was to attend at Lady Biddlecombe's, and the fresh air had somewhat restored him ere he reached the Pagoda ; but, like St. Anthony, he was doomed to another temptation. It was Lady Biddlecombe's custom of an evening, when she had company, to have a regular tea-party, which, in the phraseology of that day, was called *a drum*; Dobie called it a *kettle-drum*. A side-board, in the inner drawing-room, was most ostentatiously laid out, — on which was displayed a most superb set of Indian china, (about which there was a long story,) and

behind which, my Lady's own maid, "Lily," (a somewhat satirical sounding name for a creole,) and Mrs. Hardwick, the house-keeper, were placed to dispense that beverage so grateful to old maids and matrons,—the fragrant bohea—to the company. By the side of the tea-table, a case, of huge dimensions, containing Marasquino, Curaçoa, eau-de-vie, (of course, formerly the property of Sir John's royal friend,) was open to view.

"Most happy to see you, Doctor," said Lady B., with a smirk. "Allow me to offer you a dish of tea."

"No tea, my Lady," replied the Doctor, casting a longing look towards the liqueur-case; "it enervates the nervous system, and a medical man should have the heart of a lion."

"A cup of coffee, perhaps?"

"Coffee, Madam, is a deleterious drug."

"A *chasse-café*," then persevered Lady

Biddlecombe, offering a glass of home-made cordial. The doctor took the glass, attempted to say something about Hebe ; but the shop was paramount.

“ Mild as an emulsion ! ” he exclaimed, smacking his lips.

Sir John, who, we have already told our readers, had made a temporary retreat from the dining-room, — now joined the ladies.

“ Ah, Doctor ! better late than never ! I hope you have been taken care of. Let me recommend a glass of ‘ Crame de tay,’ my illustrious visitor ! ” Here Sir John was interrupted by Mr. Pilcher, who informed him that the gentlemen wished his presence for a moment in the dining-room. The Doctor, left to himself, proceeded to do the honours of the liqueur-case :—“ Can I help any lady ? ”

Strange to say, that though a simultaneous “ The idea of such a thing, Doctor ! ” escaped the lips of the demoiselles Lillicrap

and Stackpole, *cum multis aliis* ; — they were induced “ just to taste what it was like.”

“ Miss Stackpole ! ” exclaimed the Doctor, looking unutterable things ; “ even the goddesses might deign such nectar to sip—

‘ Then lift the cup divine
With rapture to thy rosy lip.’ ”

“ You are too kind,” responded the blue.
“ I prefer sweet wine to this.”

“ Do you ? ” said the Doctor. “ For my part, punch is my favourite beverage ; — for, as Horace says,

———— ‘ mea nec Falernae
Temperant vites, neque Formiani
Pocula colles.’ —

Punch is my liquor ! ” At this classical quotation, the Doctor, — who was the very Coryphaeus of punch-makers, — suited the action to the word, and mixed himself a glass of “ spirit-stirring ” punch. Another and another, still succeeded ; like Richard’s ghosts. So that by the time the gentlemen entered

the room, the doctor was safe in the arms of Morpheus. His legs were stretched out to their fullest extent, — an occasional snore, and the deep-drawn breathings, showed that he had not gone off in an apoplectic fit, — which his short neck and bloated visage might however have well suggested.

Lady Biddlecombe had made up her whist party; — Mr. Quelch had formed a coterie, and was hemmed in by a cordon of the literati: he was panegyrising Miss Stackpole's last sonnet. The General and Sir John were contending a game of backgammon, and deeply absorbed in all the mysteries of deuce-aces, points, blots, hits, and gammons. The Atherleys and Dudley were amusing themselves, looking over a volume of prints. Whether “Queen Mab had tweaked the Doctor's nose,” we know not; but at the moment Mrs. Dobie exclaimed,—“Double, treble, and the rub;” and Lady Biddlecombe had declared she “had never sat

behind such paper,” — the son of Galen started up and rubbed his eyes, and showed himself evidently bent on mischief. Lord Atherley had just been called to decide a disputed point at the backgammon table,— and Dudley was anticipating a few moments, uninterrupted conversation with Lady Atherley, — when the medical gentleman, in something between a reel and a swagger, approached the ottoman, and took the vacant seat.

“ Ah ! Mr. Ravensworth !” exclaimed the Doctor, holding out both his hands, (for he had that anti-Chesterfieldian trick of catching hold of the button-hole,) and literally taking and shaking his friends’ hands. Dudley, having the organ of ‘ touch-me-notishness ’ very strongly developed, as it would be called in these days of freeknowledgists, drew back :— “ happy to see you again in England ; but bless me ! how thin,—‘ nil nisi pellis et ossa ? ’ The air of Avesford will, I have no doubt,

soon restore you ; ” here he cast a knowing look at Lady Atherley.

Dudley, bowing his head, coldly thanked him, and rose. He had ever abominated the Doctor ; without therefore deigning to enter into any further conversation, he addressed Constance ; “ Would you kindly try that perfect ballad of Moore’s, ‘ When he who adores thee ? ’ I will prepare the pianoforte.” Lady Atherley answered with a glance of assent, and Dudley disappeared into the inner drawing-room.

The Doctor then, annoyed and piqued, exclaimed, “ Haughty fellow that ! ‘ When he who adores thee ! ’ — pretty clear who that is. Poor Lord Atherley ! — but Lady Atherley, beware, that half-Werter, half-Corsair, is a very dangerous man.”

Constance here rose, and was about to proceed. The Doctor intercepted her, and raising his voice, said, “ Lady Atherley, you may scorn the advice of an old friend,—but remem-

ber Jane Ashford ! — and the man who would tamper with female innocence as Mr. Ravensworth did in that instance,— would —” here Dudley, who had heard the former part of the conversation, and the allusion to Jane Ashford, stood before him, and, with anger mingled with contempt in his countenance, stepped, we must own, rather brusquely before the Doctor. The Doctor lost his balance, fell against the ottoman, and Dudley turned to Constance, whose countenance exhibited traces of various and conflicting feelings,—and calmly said, “ Be not alarmed,” and led her to the adjoining room.

Constance went mechanically to the piano ; she touched the instrument, nothing could exceed her alarm and dismay,—she stopped and blushed.

“ Pray do not stop,” said Dudley, beseechingly. She hesitated,—again her hands were on the instrument ; she began softly the symphony : at first her voice was tremulous, but

gaining courage as she proceeded, it swelled into rich and powerful melody. An artist would have vainly sought a more perfect model for St. Cecilia than Constance, as with eyes upraised, her cheek tinged with a hectic blush, her bosom heaving a gentle sigh, she breathed the touching notes ; her enthusiasm led her on, and with a beautiful and mournful expression, an exquisite and matchless tenderness, which embodied the soul and spirit of the song, and gave it breath and life, she sang that plaintive and touching air of Handel's,

“ What though I trace each herb and flower ? ”

Never did she sing more touchingly ; the music ceased, she closed the instrument,—and looking round, saw that Dudley had left the room ; all her former alarm returned.

Meanwhile Ravensworth sought the Doctor, who had retired into the dining-room, and had fortified himself with the remnants of the bottles, and in spite of his classical lore had quite

forgotten the maxim of Periander of Corinth, $\chiολοῦ κρατεῖ$ ‘be master of thy anger.’—He vented his rage with restless volubility, in furious menaces and vehement and fierce vociferation ; but neither his uproarious tumult, nor blustering protestations of vengeance produced any effect — beyond that of contempt, on the mind of Dudley. He calmly observed that he had uttered a most infamous calumny ; that the imputations against Lady Atherley were false and scandalous ; and that nothing but a most abject and public apology would satisfy his wounded honour.

“Apology, sir ! d—n, sir !” said Doctor Boyle, in an offensive attitude ; “ you show the white feather ; — none of your airs and dignities here without you wish to have your nose manipulated !”

General Dunbar now came forward, and addressing Ravensworth, led him from the room. In a few minutes he returned, and expressed to the Doctor the pleasure it would give him,

if he would allow him to offer such an explanation to Mr. Ravensworth as would put an end to so unpleasant an affair.

“To Mr. Ravensworth,” said the Doctor, “I have no apology to offer; nothing but my respect for the company prevented my chastising his impertinence.”

“Then there is nothing more to be said,” replied the General deliberately; — “but to whom shall I speak on your part?”

“Why really that is a puzzling question at a moment’s notice; but in the morning you shall hear from my friend.” So saying, the worthy but fuddled M.D. walked several steps rather irresolutely towards the door, then, stopping suddenly, he muttered something about “satisfaction,” “insufferable puppy,” “gallant gay Lothario;” and would have probably continued in that strain, had not the entrance of a servant with negus arrested his attention.—“I ’ll thank you for a glass.”—The Doctor inwardly drank confusion to his enemies,

and left the room, describing in his progress such curves, zigzags, and acute angles, as gentlemen when under the influence of the enemy commonly contrive.

The Avesford party had returned to the Priory, and Ravensworth, having arranged with General Dunbar to afford him his assistance on this momentous occasion, retired to his apartment in a state of very agitated feelings; but not from any apprehension of danger — let not his trepidation be mistaken for fear — for he possessed that courage, which, in all forgetfulness of self, feels for the honour of others. He was elevated by the powerful excitement, that if he fell, he died in the cause of one who was “dear as the ruddy drops”—which might never more “visit his sad heart.” Called to a proper sense of the critical situation in which he stood, he now devoted his time to addressing a letter to his father, and one to Constance; as he sealed and directed the latter, his soul was overwhelmed, and a deep gloom was cast

over his feelings. “Perhaps we may never meet again ! God bless thee !” he faintly murmured ; he knelt, and there, in the privacy of his thoughts and the out-pourings of his heart, he remained until the deep-toned bell of the Priory told the hour of five. He retired then for a few hours’ rest. That pillow, be it ever so downy, is restless to the head of the duellist ; and the dawn, the first grey shuddering light that flakes the east, seldom finds the extended form with closed eyes.

The small varnish-scented room, which makes the circulating library and toy-shop of a county town, has been from time out of mind the grand emporium for all the gossip and tittle-tattle, foreign and domestic ; principally the latter. To the fancy repository, then, of Mr. and the Misses Prettiman, in the High Street of Ratborough, we must now introduce our readers ; — time, as the Plays say, “ twelve o’clock !” the morning after the Biddlecombe dinner. The *dram. pers.* are, Miss Prettiman,

Miss Sibella and Miss Diana Prettiman. The scene of action was a small sanctum, divided by a curtain from the shop, and at the window of which it was the custom of one of the graces, as they were called, to take their station, and report all that passed in this fashionable promenade.

“O Sibella!” exclaimed *l’ainée*, who was posted at the window, “I wonder what is going on at the Doctor’s; no less than three notes from his house, and Captain Manley’s orderly still waiting for an answer.”

“Why, I should not wonder if there was a rumpus; the Doctor drank tea last evening at the Priory, and the milkwoman told our Anne that she had heard from the gardener, that high words had passed between him and Mr. Ravensworth.”

“Lor’ a mussy!” screeched the chaste goddess Diana, “what a pity! Mr. Ravensworth is such a nice man! such a picturesque man! so, somehow, the very moral of Lucy Ash-

ton's lover in the *Bride of Lammermoor*; him as was lost in the *Goodwin Sands*, all but his feather."

"Quite the gentleman!" echoed Miss Sibella. "So handsome!—gave me two franks, and took four tickets yesterday in our shilling loo for the beautiful hand-screens. But look, Lavinia, I declare there's the doctor's lad returning with a long, flat square box, like a backgammon board, only more dark-like, and without the squares."

"Oh, mi!—my goodness! !—who'd have thought!!! " escaped the sisters three at the same moment. "Well, I should not be surprised if it was about Lady Atherley; for the boy, when he brought Lavinia's draughts, and the pitched plaster for cook, said he had heard from the laundry-maid that went to the Doctor's to have a tooth taken out, that there was a lady in the case. The servants' hall people," continued Miss Diana, "at the Priory were full of it."

"Lady Atherley, depend upon it, an old

flame of Mr. Ravensworth's — so brother says, who heard it from Monsieur La Fleur, Captain Priddie's gentleman, when he was a *coffeing* him yesterday."

"Oh, that sweet Lady Atherley!" said the sentimental Diana. "What a bewitching creature!"

"Quite the lady," replied Sibella; "wears a white swan's down muff and tippet, like the Queen; filled our raffle yesterday for the ivory card-case—." At this moment the conference was put an end to by the entrance of Mr. Prettiman, perruquier and hair-dresser to the residents and gentry of the town of Ratborough and the neighbourhood.

"Oh, Julius, here's a to-do!" said the sisters in unison. "Dr. Boyle, Mr. Ravensworth, Lady Atherley!—duel!—pretty piece of work at the Priory! But what did Mr. La Fleur say?"

At this the *Barbière* recapitulated all the *cancan* of the steward's room, and terminated the congress by the assurance that, in

the course of his morning's cuttings, dressings, and curlings, he would come at the rights of it. We leave him to his peregrinations, and return to the belligerent Doctor.

When the “morn and cool reflection came,” he began to think that, in American phraseology, he had made a pretty considerable condarned particular fool of himself; it was now, however, too late to retract, and his thoughts turned upon how he could best get out of the scrape. Some little slur had been, on a former occasion, thrown upon the Doctor’s courage, in having allowed to pass unnoticed an insult that had been offered him at a public meeting of the subscribers to the Ratborough hospital. The Doctor had been openly accused of jobbing; and the individual who brought forward the charge accompanied it with a remark, that such conduct was disgraceful, and unworthy that of a gentleman.

“Do you mean to say, sir, that my conduct is disgraceful?” blustered forth the accused.

“Sir! I say that such conduct *is* disgraceful in *any* man.”

“Oh!” quickly interrupted the M.D., “if you would say *that* of any man, the remark is general, and I cannot apply it personally.”

“*Mais revenons à nos moutons.*” Publicity, by which the legal authorities of the peaceful borough would be called upon to interfere, was the Doctor’s best chance. A letter then was dispatched to Mr. Counsellor Wheezle, who had lately replied to a hostile message by the peaceful, or, as it is better described, “civil” process of a criminal information, and to whom the Doctor looked for the realisation of the saying, “a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind,” requesting the loan of his pistols, and urging him to the strictest silence, for fear of magisterial interference. In order, also, that all the counsellor’s establishment might be aware of the secret mission, he requested his servant would wait for a case of duelling pistols.

Counsellor Wheezle being from home at a

turnpike meeting, Mrs. Wheezle, without opening the note, sent the pistols, little dreaming (as they had never been used “after their deserts”) of the mischief they were intended for. Armed, then, with a neat mahogany case, eighteen inches long, three deep, and some six broad, containing the warlike weapons, in one hand, and the oilskin basket in the other, (for the Doctor dispensed medicine,) did the “potticary’s boy” perambulate the High-street of Ratborough. On reaching his master’s house he found him impatient for his return.

“ Well ! well ! what answer ? ”

“ Please, sir, Mr. Counsellor Wheezle’s not at home ; but his missus sent this case. I called at Mr. Bryan’s to borrow the brown horse for the chay ; sorry to say he’s *in medicine*, (the boy had always been told never to call drugs physic,) so I ordered the fly from the Chequers.”

The third note which had attracted the attention of the demoiselles of the temple of

fashion was to Surgeon Aykbone, requesting him to be in readiness at five o'clock at the Coach and Horses, near Cottesmere Heath, and to be prepared with lint, sticking-plaster, bandages, probes, bullet forceps, tourniquets, amputating knives, saws, and any other little useful things that might be requisite in case a gentleman should require surgical aid in an emergency. The Doctor prescribed for himself the following draught, which we also recommend to timid gentlemen placed in similar situations : —

R Aquæ bulliantis $\frac{3}{4}$ iii.
Sacchari albi $\frac{3}{4}$ ii.
Succi limonis oz. i.
Aqua forte *potsheeni* $\frac{3}{4}$ vi.

Misce. Fiat haustus statim sumendus.

But notwithstanding this exhilarating draught was taken in the most liberal construction of the last direction, *statim sumendus*, that is at a gulp, the hours passed tediously on, and the nerves were as difficult to be administered to

as was the “ diseased mind ” of Macbeth’s better half, at the period she became a somnambulist.

The Doctor, attributing the counsellor’s silence to that caution which always characterised the learned recorder, and feeling convinced that he would lose no time in giving information to the proper authorities, found his valour rising slowly to “ set fair.” He immediately penned a note to Captain Manley, a most gallant officer of the marines, one who had served with honour, and had ever proved himself “ *in utrumque paratus*,” and who had lost his arm in that gallant action, where Exmouth brought to reason a ferocious government, and destroyed for ever the insufferable and horrid system of Christian slavery. Captain Manley at once acceded to the Doctor’s request, of being his friend upon the occasion ; still expressing a hope that matters might be amicably arranged, and intimating that he begged the Doctor would lose no time in

coming to his house, to prevent the possibility of any interference. A note was forwarded to General Dunbar; five o'clock was the hour named, and the spot a retired dingle, near Cottesmere Heath. The very name of the place appointed for the meeting had a hostile sound in the ears of the Doctor, and his heart retired more within itself. It was a glorious evening—the day had been hot and oppressive, “the insect world were on the wing,” and the air was swarming with the happy and varied sounds of life.

The heavens were smiling, the sky was bright and beautiful, one pile of gorgeous clouds was tinged with the glories of the setting sun, and the flowers of spring were in their richest bloom, as the General and Ravensworth left the priory.

“ It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a nun
Breathless with adoration ; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity.”

Stopping at a small public-house, the General, taking the pistols from the carriage, led Dudley through a few lonely fields to one protected from observation by the sudden rising of a high wooded bank. It was thickly clothed with copsewood ; beneath them stretched the rich cultivated lands of Avesford, full of tall trees, hedge-rows, masses of planting, smiling uplands, all in their freshest verdure. Herds of deer were reposing in the sheltered valley. The place was at present solitary, which, though so little distant from the busy hum of men, had a wonderful air of romantic, settled, and holy stillness ; the inexplicable stillness of evening ! Who, in contemplating the tranquillity of the landscape, could conceive it to be one selected for a deed of blood ? Again, what silence and harmony reign ; no sounds strike on the ear : what a contrast to the turbulent scenes of a great city, overgrown with wealth, luxury, misery, and folly ! How mingled were the feelings

that found way to Dudley's heart, as he calmly waited the moment of his fate: he felt that, without Constance, life was to him a blank; then, the pride of sacrificing all for her, who, though she had dashed the cup of happiness from his lips, was the only object that bound him to existence.

But he had little time to commune with his feelings,—for in a few moments his reverie was disturbed by the approach of the parties. A distant bow of recognition took place,—the General, as Dudley's friend, proposed, as an accommodation, that an ample apology might still put an end to so unpleasant a business. Manley, whose “courage was as keen, but at the same time as polished as his sword,” saw the impracticability of such a proceeding, under the circumstance of a hand having been raised against his friend,—which in all honourable codes is tantamount to a blow. The ground was then measured,—at this momentous crisis the Doctor felt “his valour oozing out at the palms

of his hands ;” in vain like Fatima’s “sister dear,” he strained his eyes, but could see “no galloping” to his rescue. The pistols were given to the parties; it would be impossible to describe the varieties of expression, or the contortions that the physiognomy of the Doctor underwent,—

“ For men will tremble or turn paler
With too much or too little valour.”

Without any great skill in the science of Lavater, no one could have inclined to think the former predominated. The seconds retired, the word was given, both fired, the smoke disappeared, and each was standing in the same attitude. Captain Manley now stepped between, and proposed to the General that if Ravensworth would make an apology for his conduct, the Doctor was willing to receive it. Ravensworth replied through his second, “that he never would apologise for performing what he considered was the duty of every man, the pro-

tection of woman from insult ; the offence had emanated from the Doctor, and nothing less than an ample apology would be satisfactory to his feelings."

"Then, gentlemen, we must proceed," said the Captain. The Doctor shook from head to foot, and whispered something to his second, which only received for reply—

"Impossible,—we must go on."

The pistols were again loaded, and in a state of nervous trepidation the Doctor set the hair trigger. Ere the words "Are you ready, gentlemen ?" had been uttered, the Doctor touched by accident the trigger, the pistol went off, the ball grazing and slightly wounding his own foot ; down sprawled the son of Galen, exclaiming, "I'm shot,—wounded,—desperately wounded,—I'm a dead man,—I'm—." Ravensworth firing his pistol in the air, now came forward and offered every assistance in his power. Surgeon Aykbone, who had heard the reports from a spot so conveniently situated

that he could not see what was passing,—immediately came forward. The wound was pronounced slight, and, peace being proclaimed, the parties returned home. The Doctor was consoled at his wound by the thought of the *éclat* the affair would make; one drawback alone he felt, and which he trusted to his *fidus Achates*: “only think! the fly will cost one pound one!”

CHAPTER V.

HOAXING.

"Jokes are like sky-rockets, which though they are meant only to amuse, yet are often, according to the place or object on which they light, the cause of mischief and of pain, if not of destruction."

MRS. OPIE.

—“Nimis uncis
Naribus indulges”—

PERS. SAT. I. 40.

"You drive the jest too far."

DRYDEN.

IT is not to be supposed that in the gossiping town of Ratborough, where a trifling matter always created a great stir, so important an event as the one recorded in the preceding

chapter, could be regarded with indifference. It soon became the prevailing topic; the affair was in every one's mouth, and afforded a most exquisite *morceau* for all the scandal-mongers, and the “Ratborough Journal.” Dudley was pronounced to be the “most handsomest, most politest, most bravest young man in the whole universal world.” The Doctor, who had become the laughing-stock of the town,—drove quietly up and down the High-street looking most thoughtful, — his foot bandaged up, and trying to create a sympathy.

“Oh la! what a man of consequence the Doctor looks to-day.” “Well I’m sure, the Doctor does look as if the King had sent for him, and he could ’nt go.” “Dear me, now, doesn’t he look consequential?” exclaimed the Prettymans; in short, all the idlers, gossips, and titupping misses, talked of nothing else but the spirited conduct of the parties; and it would be endless to notice the additions and editions,

corrected and revised of “*the affair*,” as it was, *par excellence*, called, during the three glorious days through which the wonderment lived. The country press slyly hinted at senatorial Giovanis and passionate physicians ; and dog-grels, lampoons, pasquinades, and caricatures kept irritatingly alive the unfortunate story, until our pugnacious Doctor found that he was becoming the object of universal derision.

Unfortunately for the medical gentleman, two squadrons of hussars occupied some small wooden buildings, about a mile from the town, looking like children’s Noah’s arks, but which were called the barracks, and these held more than two of a kind. Among the officers were two young wild, rattling, roaring roystering cornets, (Charles Cyril and Tom Fauconberg by name,) just emancipated from Eton. They were always ready with a practical joke ; and, on account of certain eccentric propensities, were dignified with the enviable cognomens of the *Hoaxer* and the *Slasher*. Cicero has observed

that a jest is never uttered with a better grace than when it is accompanied by a serious countenance ; and this Charles Cyril possessed to an eminent degree. The cornets were spoken of in the regiment as “ good fellows,” though a *little* wild, with rather too high a flow of spirits.” So good an object as the Ratborough Galen could not fail to attract the attention of the Hoaxter, who, on hearing of the duel, immediately set his wits to work, and, as they were most prolific, on the same night the results were put in execution.

A little after 12 o’clock, a mounted party sallied forth from the barracks, headed by the Hoaxter, disguised as a country servant. On entering the High-street, his comrades separated, leaving him to enact the principal *rôle* of the evening’s performance. In a few minutes, a loud ringing was heard at the Doctor’s door.

“ Who’s there ? ” exclaimed a shrill female voice, from the attic.

“ Doctor Boyle ! Doctor Boyle is wanted !” replied the Cornet, assuming the Somersetshire dialect.

“ The Doctor is not very well, and has given orders not to be disturbed,” responded the female voice.

“ General Dunbar has been overturned ; — broke his arm, sprained his wrist, and fractured his skull. It’s a case of loife and death, zure enough !” said the Hoaxter, who during this conversation kept continually ringing the bell.

The Doctor, who had only just retired, and who fancied it might only be the application of some *poor* patient, had hitherto turned a deaf ear to the entreáties ; the moment the name of *General Dunbar* was mentioned, he hastily put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and, opening his bed-room window, told the young man to wait, and he would dress and descend.

“ I be cruel glad to zee you. Mayhap, zir,

you h'an't a-heard the news. Poor General Dunbar ! No time for dressing, zir ; if you can't come now, I mun go to one as will ! I 've a chay ready."

"One moment, young man."

"Not one, zir!"

The Doctor descended hastily. By a preconcerted signal, a chaise which had been in waiting now drove up to the door.

"I really can't go this figure!" said the Doctor, eyeing the scraggy housemaid, who, with her apron over her face, was holding a candle, and calling for Jeemes to bring the case of instruments.

"Postboy, drive to Doctor Hargreaves!" said the Cornet, getting into the carriage himself, and declaring it would be as much as his place was worth to wait any longer. The Doctor hesitated, and, like many of the other sex that have deliberated, was lost. He entered the carriage.

"Make the best of your way," shouted the Hoaxter. "Pay back!"

The whole of this affair had taken much less time to execute than we have taken to narrate it. When the Doctor began to collect his scattered ideas, he commenced numberless inquiries as to the nature of the accident. To all of these, the Hoaxter either replied unintelligibly, through the fog of a thick handkerchief, or in sounds dextrously compounded of sigh, groan, and snore, in equal quantities. The chaise rattled on, over a very rough road, and nothing but the idea of a rich compound fracture soothed the agitated spirits of the half-clothed, wholly-shaken, dismal, shivering member of the College of Physicians.

On reaching a small public-house the Hoaxter ordered the postboy to stop. Getting out of the carriage, he requested the Doctor to follow him; and, no sooner had the medical victim descended from the vehicle and stood quivering

in the road, (a midnight He-Musidora,) than the Cornet jumped in, and shut the door.

“Home!” cried he to the postboy;—“a guinea, or nothing!” At the irresistible word guinea the postboy’s ears were shot. “Make the best of your way, stop at the beast-market.” Off whirled the chaise at the rate of fifteen miles an hour, leaving the wretched practitioner, in his almost primitive attire, five honest miles from the dark, dull, and slumbering little town of Ratborough.

In less than five and twenty minutes the Cornet had landed in a bye street near the Swan Inn; a few moments sufficed to enable him to exchange his habiliments; and as the hour of two o’clock was being cried by the two watchful guardians of the night, Charley Cyrill rushed into a room at the Wheatsheaf, watch in hand, exclaiming—

“Well, I’ve won by half a minute! I drew, turned out, and ran to ground the old Varmint in something under the hour!” The party

to whom this was addressed consisted of the officers we have previously alluded to, seated round a large table, on which was being placed the inn's best supper : this consisted of deviled turkey's remnants, grilled bones, lobster salads, anchovy toast, Welch rabbits, iced champagne, rack punch, and a huge bowl of bishop.

“ Bravo, Cyrill !” exclaimed half a dozen voices at the same time. “ Here, old fellow ! here's your twenty pounds ! you richly deserve them.”

“ Hang the money !” replied the Hoaxter. “ Let it go towards the supper ; we'll drink the old boy's health, and many happy returns of the night in bumpers of champagne. Waiter ! waiter, attention ;—draw corks ! when I says draw I doesn't mean draw,—but when I says *corks*, let me see them there corks fly briskly out of the bottles ; that's right, let it be done in a soldier-like, or rather, waiter-like manner ! ”

We will leave the officers to enjoy their

supper, where song and sillery, mirth and laughter prevailed, and return to the unfortunate object of the night's adventure, who found himself, at "past one o'clock and a cloudy morning," quaking in his linen dressing-gown at the door of a small public-house. After rapping ineffectually for some minutes, he proceeded through a small yard to the back entrance; the noise of a chain dragging over a wooden edge, and a low, savage growling of a watch-dog, followed by a loud fierce bark, warned him not to intrude farther, as he might elect himself into an unpleasant zoological society. Summoning courage, he returned to his first point of attack, and with a log of wood gave a knock worthy of the most high-bred, powder-headed, pampered London footman.

"Who's there?" inquired a voice from a small window, "speak, or I'll fire! you've frightened my wife out of her three senses!" and suiting the action to the word, thrust a

large, broad brass blunderbuss, very like a well kept trumpet, out of the window.

“An accident has happened,” rejoined the Doctor.

“Come away, Matthew ; don’t stand talking to those trampers,” exclaimed a dissatisfied female voice within.

Mr. Matthew Hodges’ better half was all on the moan. “Mathew, I say, come away this minute ; don’t let them in, you know how they stole all our best pewter pots last week.”

“Coming, my dear,” said the husband.

“I warrant he’s one of the gang. Come, shut the window, or I shall catch my death of cold,” said the tender-hearted hostess.

The husband, as all husbands are bound to do, was *about* to obey his wife’s mandate, when the Doctor throwing all his energies into what now appeared a forlorn hope, exclaimed, — “I’m Doctor Boyle of Ratborough, called to attend General Dunbar, who has met with an

accident ; if you dare to refuse me admittance, I'll have your sign stripped over your head, I'll indict you for——;” and here, as the Doctor was at a loss for a second threat, he slurred over the close of his speech ;—“ Take me in till daylight, and a guinea shall be yours.”

A consultation took place in a low tone, on the monetary system ; which ended in Matthew Hodges requesting the gentleman would wait a minute, and he would let him in. Joe the ostler was now called up, and in less than ten minutes the Doctor found himself comfortably ensconced in the cozy nook of a kitchen fire, enjoying a glass of that mixture so much admired by waggoners, trampers, horse-keepers and early travellers, called “ purl.” The Doctor gave his own version of the affair, of being called up in the middle of the night, of how he set the General’s limbs in his carriage, and how magnanimously he had acted in giving up his place in the carriage to the General’s servant, who had met with a severe concussion.

The fatigues of the night soon procured the medical man a most excellent sleep, and at an early hour the ostler was despatched for his clothes, and horse, and before ten o'clock our worthy M.D., mounted on his *charger*, (for so a doctor's *Rozinante* may well be styled,) entered the town of Ratborough.

The party we left at the Wheatsheaf did ample justice to "mine host's supper." They were a set of careless souls, choice spirits, "fellows of infinite jest and merriment," and after laying in a quantum sufficit of that stimulus to drink, vulgarly called "a devil," the *convives* began to play off flashes of merriment: some retailed stale jokes and pilfered witticisms, the glass circulated freely, the catch and glee went round, the Hoaxer set the table literally in a *roar*, and before three o'clock the gallant officers were (to use the phrase applied to fashionable inebriety) "rather elated, a little the worse for wine." The bill was called for (breakages did not form the smallest items) and settled; and

the party beat a retreat towards the barracks. Yet the demon of mischief seemed to possess the mind of the Hoaxter, for, on passing the Doctor's house, a large red and green light attracted his attention. “Why, what on earth's this!” hiccupped out Charley Cyrill, “the ΦΑΡΜΑΚΟΠΩΛΗΤΗΡΙΟΝ” — the Pharmacopoleterion — for such was the classical name the would-be-thought erudite M.D. had given his laboratory—it being blazoned forth in Greek characters, though the Doctor knew about as much of the Greek language as the shoemaker did of the Latin tongue, when after a war of words, with his rival neighbour of the last, in which each out-heroded Herod in their puffing announcements, as follow—“the cheapest shop in England, the cheapest shop in the world, selling off at prime cost, selling off *under* prime cost:” he outdid his brother Crispin's motto of—

“Conscia mens recti famæ mendacia ridet,”

by adding—

“Conscia mens and women’s recti,” &c., &c.

“A head too, Ga—Galen’s, ‘ throw physic to the dogs’;”—a missile accompanied this quotation, which entirely demolished the coloured bottles of indigo and cochineal;—“oh, unworthy son of Esculapius! come, Slasher, here’s a lark, — give me a lift;” mounting on his brother Cornet’s shoulders the head was speedily decapitated; “but we must not leave the Pharmacopoleterion without any sign, there’s one two doors off that will just suit; lend us a hand.” In a few moments a board with “funerals performed” had replaced the Galen’s head: “Holloa, what’s this? — Zimmerman, Pawnbroker,—Money lent,—three balls,—two to one against you,—let’s draw the Jew !”

“Leave him alone,” cried Fauconberg; “leave Zimmerman in his *solitude*.”

“Well, we’ll *leave* him *a loan*, which is more than he’d do towards us.”

But we will not stop to enumerate other similar frolics that took place on this memorable morning ; suffice it to say, that the list of lamps broken, signs displaced, knockers “absent without leave,” was considerable. Great was the consternation, many were the surmises among the worthy burghers of the ancient town of Ratborough, as to the culprits ; for once public rumour was right,—and the officers of H. M. —— Hussars were strongly suspected. A small knot of the greatest sufferers had assembled near the corn-market, through which the Doctor (hitherto unconscious of the decapitation of his own laboratory), was now passing.

“Good morning, Doctor !” exclaimed Mr. Spicer the grocer, whose sugar-loaves had been replaced by three golden balls from the neighbouring pawnbroker’s.

“Morning, gentlemen ; any news stirring in the borough ?”

“ An event *has* occurred, Doctor, but you may have heard a rumour.”

“ Indeed, no ! I was sent for *professionally* last night out of town (here the Doctor shook a little), and am only just returned ;—*we* medical men—” and here the worthy practitioner would have entered into a lengthy detail of the disinterestedness of his conduct in sacrificing every consideration for the public good,—when Mr. Feltam the hatter, a tall, pompous, portly, awe-striking man,—his eye flashing fire, joined the coterie.

“ Well, since I’ve known this borough, never was there a greater infringement on the rights and liberties of the subjects.” (Mr. Feltam was vice-president of the Ratborough reform association, and a bit of an orator.) “ Is it not enough to be called upon to support a standing army,—are not the hard earnings of the working classes, gained by the sweat of their brow, wrung from them to pay this useless force ?”

“ Bless my soul, Mr. Feltam, what has

occurred?" interrupted Doctor Boyle, smarting under the reminiscences of the previous night's adventure.

"What *has* occurred, Doctor! have you not yet been home?" Here the medical man's imagination ran most vividly abroad.

"Not burned down my house, I hope,—not arson?"

"Felony, felony!" cried Mr. Spicer.

"Come, gentlemen, let us talk this matter over, let us call a public meeting, let us show the authorities, that we, the respectable housekeepers, are not to be trampled upon by the iron heel of the proud aristocratic popinjays;" exclaimed Mr. Feltam, pointing to his own shop; "felony! they've broken open my warehouse door, and stolen my sign, my hat, my large *red tin hat*; the 'only original hat!'" During this conversation the enraged party were proceeding rapidly towards the High-street; at the door of the Doctor's house a crowd of ragged urchins had assembled.

When the poor practitioner saw the havock, he looked like Marius at Carthage “ a remnant of life amid a city of ruin !” the wires of the night-bell had been cut, and the handle hung dangling like a broken limb at the door; the knocker had been wrenched off, the Galen’s head had been carried off, the party-coloured lamp was broken off—(to shivers); the offensive board from the undertaker’s was, in the Doctor’s eyes, the unkindest cut of all! “ A joke ’s a joke ! and even practical jests are very capital in their way, if you can only get the other party to see the fun of them.” So says one who is no mean authority on these matters : but as the worthy burghers of Ratborough were so dull of comprehension, as to be quite lost to a sense of the drollery of the previous night’s proceedings,—they took up the affair seriously, and after much deliberation, it was finally arranged that Doctor Boyle, with his friend Counsellor Wheeze, should call at the barracks and try and ascertain the truth of the reports.

On reaching their destination they were most cordially received by the officers, and pressed to remain for luncheon: the wary counsellor put a few indirect questions, but all they elucidated was an expression of anger and commiseration from the senior officer,—who was perfectly ignorant of the real parties,—at the disgraceful outrage that had been committed upon the peaceful inhabitants of Ratborough. Luncheon was announced; both the Doctor and the counsellor promptly seemed to forget their grievances, in a bumper of Maraschino. These worthy citizens drank the healths of “the gallant corps, whose lion-like conduct in the field was only to be equalled by their lamb-like conduct at home;” a few significant looks were exchanged,—the Hoaxter being orderly officer, was now called to stables,—on passing one, he espied two raw-boned splashed animals surprised with corn.

“Sergeant Priestly, whose horses are those? what business have they in the troop stables?”

"Please sir," replied the smart sergeant, "they belong to the gentlemen in the mess-room."

"Very well,—in future let them be put in an officer's empty stable." The Cornet with an evident hankering after the Doctor's property, returned to the stable; a thought seemed at once to strike him, and after hurrying into his room he shortly returned with a small phial; in a second the contents of it were dropped upon the hind legs of the two steeds, and then with a face that would have made any old lady exclaim, "that she doubted whether butter would melt in his mouth," he re-entered the mess-room.

The Doctor was loudly holding forth upon the merits of the army; and after thanking his kind hosts for their polite attention, (for the object of the mission was lost in the Maraschino,) the horses were ordered round, and the party were wished a very pleasant ride home. On preparing to mount, the Doctor

seemed rather surprised at some half dozen curs, who set up the most discordant yelling, growling and barking.

The Counsellor thinking discretion the better part of valour, remained on terra firma ; the Doctor's horse now sprang forward, shook himself, backed, kicked, and went through a series of curvets and carakolets.

"Confound the brute!" said the Doctor.

"Playful creature," exclaimed the Cornet, watching the proceedings ; "regular bit of blood!"

Seizing the pommel with an agility that surprised the spectators, the Doctor sprang into the saddle,—off started the animal,—head in the air, giving a sharp kick, whenever the application of the rider's spurs was more than usually effective. The yelling increased.

"Back, back curs!" cried the Slasher, cracking a hunting-whip, and thereby frightening the steed prodigiously. "Now sir, as our riding-master says ; — let me see them there

paces done in a regerlar and distinct manner,— walk steady and h'easy,— trot strong and h'active,— canter light and h'airy,— charge h'animated vigorous, but not violent,— hold tight, catch firm grip hold of the mane.”

The Doctor, attending to this advice, held fast by the mane and clung by his legs, his spurs, in the most approved St. John Long fashion, producing the counter-irritation to his horse's neck. Another crack of the whip, and off scampered the Doctor's horse—Johnny Gilpin of Edmonton renown was a joke to him ! just as he crossed the barrack-yard, the door of an out-house was opened, and about four couple of drag-hounds—the red-herring pack as they were called — were unkennelled, the Doctor's horse increased his pace, and away he went down the steep hill towards Ratborough.

As a snow-ball gathers by rolling, so did the pack increase at every step; a butcher's boy on horseback joined the chase,— and with two fingers in his mouth “whistled as he

went ; ” a few ragged little urchins set up a hallooing.

“ Go home, tailor ; when did you leave your shop-board ? ” cried one in his shirt sleeves.

“ Why don’t you sit cross-legged ? ” groaned a second.

“ Snip ! ” screamed a third.

“ Do you v’ant your horse holded ? ” shouted a fourth.

“ Tally-ho ! ” roared a fifth, while numerous voices anxiously inquired, whether his revered parent was aware of his absence, or in common parlance, “ Whether his mother knew he was out ? ”

Fortunately for our hunted friend it was beast-market day, and as he approached the suburbs a drove of oxen and a flock of sheep seemed to dispute the road with him ; the sheep positively seemed in the league to distress him,— they ran at him, following one another with involuntary energy. Then, ever and anon, the yelping and barking of the dogs,

— the loud oaths and cries of the drover,— the bleating of the sheep,— filled up the dismal chorus; — and now the gates of a straw-yard spread invitingly open ;—the Doctor gave his horse a sudden jerk, turned him into the yard, but in the great exertion pitched over his head, and came broadside into some stubble ; that accomplishment produced evident signs that pigs had passed some portion of their leisure time there. The hounds, coming to a check, threw up their heads, and consoled themselves by worrying a sheep. The Doctor in the mean time, like Sir W. Blunt on his return from Holmedon,

“ New lighted from his horse,
Stained with the variation of each soil,”

felt himself (to use a phrase of Jonathan’s,) “ most teetocasionally exflunctified ; ” he skulked through the back streets to his own residence, a disconcerted deputation in himself, and there for the present we take leave to deposit him. Counsellor Wheezle’s officiousness was not left

unpunished ; the following day there were no less than three hundred letters put in the post, directing tradesmen and others to send or come to Counsellor Wheezle's at three o'clock, precisely. At that hour it were impossible to recount the business of the “flux of company” that knocked at the door or crowded the entrance. Here was the tallow-chandler with six dozen pounds of moulds and four of kitchen,—there a waggon load of coals, a patent mangle, a cart-load of Dutch tiles ; next came the landlords of the Swan, Wheatsheaf, and Fleece, to take orders for dinners and suppers ;—three pair of post-horses,—two one-horse flies, the owner of a travelling show—to treat for the purchase of a young rhinoceros, and then a patent iron coffin to receive the body of the dead counsellor ; two tailors next appeared, half a dozen boot-makers, —one glass-coach,—four chaises ;—at last a hearse drove up ; a gentleman called in consequence of a challenge received from the coun-

sellor. Servants out of place of all kinds appeared,—tradesmen with fish, fowl, flesh,—confectionary, wine, beer—all attended. Two men came with a huge looking-glass, and a van containing tables and chairs and long cane rout seats; one led up a young colt; a boy brought three gross of tobacco-pipes; and the strolling company came for a bespeak.

There is a certain point to which forbearance may go, but there is also a certain point at which it will stop. When the Ratborough Halford awoke in the morning, and thought over the events of the preceding day, and, moreover found himself considerably bruised by his fall, he fell to considering what course he could adopt to rescue himself and his townsmen from any more nocturnal attacks. Were confirmation required as to the parties implicated in the late transactions in the borough, he thought the event of the previous day at the barracks was sufficient evidence; and he declared his intention of treating the affair se-

riously, by addressing the commander-in-chief ; but before his brimful passion could in any way bubble over, a circumstance occurred which entirely threw the whole affair into the back-ground.

A political jobber (Mr. Ledbeter) who commanded some half-dozen votes, had proposed to the worthy mayor and corporation the trial of a new stove, invented by himself; and which, to use his own phrase, was to combine “elegance, utility, and economy.” A trial was granted ; but unfortunately the old-fashioned servants, who had been for nearly half a century fixtures at the town-hall, reprobated the introduction of any new-fangled inventions, and left the stove to take care of itself.

Early in the morning, the housekeeper stated, as it afterwards came out in evidence, that she had remarked a strong smell of burning, and had complained of the immense heat that had pervaded the whole building ; she had mentioned it to her husband, who had men-

tioned it to the porter, who had mentioned it to the town-crier, who had mentioned it to no one.

About eight o'clock the town clerk, having occasion to get some papers for the worshipful magistrate's signature, entered the hall, and was immediately sensible of a decided presence of subdued fire. Thoroughly alarmed, he instantly aroused all the servants and neighbours : *of course* the keys of the engine-houses, "kept at Mr. Smith's," could not be found ; the ladders were being re-stepped, and the water-pipes were out of repair. In less than half an hour the flames had communicated to the left wing, a small building in which all the records of the borough were kept,—municipal documents, papers of inestimable (rural) value, and the loss of which could never be repaired.

During this time several engines arrived, and began to ascertain their various states of decay. The news spread like wild-fire ; it reached the barracks, and before nine o'clock

the whole of the squadrons of the —th Hussars were on the spot.

The conflagration raged with unabating fury ; nothing could exceed the praiseworthy and daring conduct of the military ; a small party under the command of the Adelphi cornets, the Slasher and Charles Cyril, were nearly cut off while doing duty on one of the wings of the building, and in which were deposited those valuable records of the borough. Some portion of the intermediate building fell, and the poor fellows were left in a most precarious situation, completely surrounded by flames, and hoaxing appeared on the brink of losing one of its brightest ornaments. Presently their perilous condition was observed ; and a fire-ladder (which happily had several steps at irregular intervals) being reared against the side of the building, the parties descended by means of it. The last to descend were the two officers in question, bearing with them an iron box. Immediately afterwards the whole

building was in one raging flame; as many men as could be spared from the military, were kept parading up and down the streets during the day, to check any depredations or outrages, and to assist in removing all the valuable documents and property that were saved from the building.

Throughout the morning the fire continued to burn with great fury, but the engines, (having put in to wood and water,) played late in the day, and, being then kept constantly at work, they at last subdued the fire, and, in a few hours, the far-famed town-hall of Rat-borough presented a lamentable spectacle of blackened and smoking ruins. At four o'clock the military and constables, who had been on duty from the commencement of the conflagration, were relieved.

At a public meeting of the inhabitants,—for on calamitous corporation events there is nothing breathes the general heart so effectively as a fat gentleman in a large chair, with one

or two vehement district Ciceros about him;— at the meeting, then, it was resolved unanimously that the thanks of the mayor and corporation of the ancient and loyal borough of Ratborough be given to the officers and men of the —— Hussars, for the zealous services rendered by them on the occasion of the late calamitous fire at the town-hall, and that a report be forwarded to His Royal Highness the Duke of York, commander-in-chief, expressing the high satisfaction the civil authorities entertain at the soldier-like conduct of the troops, in their exertions to arrest the progress of the flames and to preserve the property of the inhabitants. The meeting was followed by a public dinner, at which the freedom of the borough was presented to the officers. Every honour was paid to the military, nor was it undeserved, for a finer, braver, better set of men, than the —— Hussars, never existed. In Spain, Portugal, and at Waterloo, they had covered themselves with glory, not only

by that heart of oak, manly, English indomitable courage, for which our soldiers are distinguished, but by that higher and more chivalrous species of valour, which is mental rather than personal, and which follows calmly and feelingly in the paths of duty, amidst the most appalling dangers, fully realising that character of the British soldier so ably described by Napier, “who endures with surprising fortitude the worst of ills, sustains the most terrible assaults in battle unmoved, and, at all times, proves that, while no physical military qualification is wanting, the fount of honour is full and fresh within him.”

A return dinner was, of course, given at the barracks, to which the civil authorities and the leading people of Ratborough were invited, and, of course, attended. Nothing could exceed the good humour that prevailed ; all were apparently in the highest state of cordiality and boon companionship ; every circumstance tended to mirthful jollity ; before

the cloth was removed they all felt like old friends, although many met for the first time. “The feast of reason” being over, the tables were cleared for “the flow of bowl.” As the wine circled round, good humour found vent in many a merry jest and tale of by-gone days, and, as the vinous influence increased, the jovial set became more clamorous.

“The night drove on wi’ sangs and clatter ;”

many an excellent story was told, and many a song was sung ; all seemed disposed to chorus the favorite old bacchanalian ditty,

“The day is gone, the night’s our own ;
Then let us feast the soul ;
If any pain or care remain,
We’ll drown it in the bowl.”

The Hoaxter trolled forth Byron’s “Fill the goblet again.” It was a night of infinite fun and frolic ; the hours fled so fast, that morning fairly broke through the windows, figuratively

speaking, before the guests were aware of it. At length their worshipfuls rose to depart. the Doctor, nothing loth, was easily pressed to stay, under the promise of a lift home. There was a consciousness among the whole party that the worthy M.D. had been a little too severely treated in the late midnight revels, and an anxiety arose to redeem the past. A brilliant thought of the Slasher's brought about a consummation which all had devoutly wished.

"Doctor, that's a neat horse of yours :" the Doctor's face elongated with the remembrance of the trick played upon him. "What a capital buggy horse he would make : why don't you put him in harness ?"

"First catch your buggy, as Mrs. Glass would say. We country practitioners,—though, thank heaven, I have no reason to complain—"

"By the way," interrupted Tom Fauconberg, "that reminds me that Charley Cyrill is

going to present you his jaunting car: don't mention it, as he wishes to do it with an appropriate speech: ah, here he comes."

At this moment the Hoaxter re-entered the room, and, wonderful to relate, had seen the mayor and corporation to their carriages, without applying squibs and crackers to the horses' tails, unbuckling the bridles, or extracting the lynch-pins.

"Charley, my boy," exclaimed the Slasher, "we have let out the secret: the Doctor at first would not hear of accepting your car; but as you are so pressing—"

"*I* pressing! What jaunting-car?" stammered out the Cornet."

"Really, Captain Cyrill," said the Doctor, taking up the running fire, and giving the cornet brevet rank, "I do really feel highly flattered, and most profoundly grateful for your generous gift; but I fear I shall rob you."

"Rob!" replied the Slasher, "we are going

to Ireland : taking a jaunting car there would be a regular case of coals to Newcastle ! ”

The Hoaxter, or rather, in this instance, the hoaxee, caught the idea, and delighted at an opportunity of wiping off all old scores with the Doctor, said,

“ Doctor, I insist—say no more. Gentlemen, Doctor Boyle’s health, and may he live long to enjoy all the good things of this world, and among them my jaunting-car.”

This toast, a bumper at parting, was received with cheers, nine times nine, and one cheer more for Boyle. Broiled bones, with their usual concomitants, were now produced ; an hour afterwards the Doctor was lifted into his fly, and departed ; but not till the officers had assured him that they should be happy at all times to see him in the same friendly manner, an invitation which, had the regiment remained in its then station, the Doctor would doubtless frequently have availed himself of.

“ Only fancy Doctor Boyle keeping his car-

riage," exclaimed all the ladies of the feline coteries at Ratborough, as he trotted down the streets in his jaunting-car.

"Oh, say not woman's heart is bought" is the burthen of a snatch, and far be it from us to doubt the assertion. Heaven forefend that we should say their hearts are influenced by mercenary motives; but painfully sure is it, that in less than six weeks, a maiden lady, rejoicing in the name of Quincey, who for years had declared, that having been brought up with extravagant ideas, she never could marry any man that did not afford her the luxury of a carriage, (and that therefore the Doctor must give up all hope of her,) had at last consented to take the worthy practitioner for better or worse, as the following paragraph in the county newspaper announced:

"Yesterday was married at St. Philip's Church, Doctor Boyle, M.D., to Miss Rachel

Quincey, sixth daughter of the late Captain Robert Quincey, Bombay Native Infantry."

In the words of our great novelist,—“Prodigious ! ”

CHAPTER VI.

INTERVIEW—DUDLEY AND CONSTANCE.

“Amor puo molto piu che ne voi ne io possiamo.”

Boccace.

“The faults of love by love are justified.”

Dryden.

DUDLEY and Constance were now daily thrown together. When she rode on horseback he was always her escort ; in her walks, and drives, he accompanied her. In the evening he was ever at her side, when with that voice low and sweet—“an excellent thing in woman,”—and in perfect taste, she sang the learned yet simple compositions of the ancient masters. They read together Scott,

Byron, Wordsworth, Campbell ; they applied poetry to their own emotions—often did he recite that sweet dirge of Byron's, “ Fare thee well !” She listened to the truths of passion from the breath of poetry. Two months passed away in this pleasant but dangerous delirium. Constance was not unconscious of the influence she possessed over Dudley's mind ; but the result of it was so subdued and well controlled that she denied, even to herself, that under its shadow Love was crouching !

One evening, when Dudley had retired early from the dining-room, disgusted at the noisy mirth of the idly busy, thoughtless throng, “ to brood in sorrow o'er his griefs,” he entered the conservatory. The air, flower-fed, oppressed him. He hastily threw open the window, and stepped into the balcony which overlooked the lake. The moon had not yet risen ; it was the hour in which imagination seems to have the greatest power over us—

— “The hour is come,
When they that sail along the distant seas
Languish for home ; and they, that in the morn
Said to sweet friends “ farewell ! ” melt as at parting ;
When just gone forth, the pilgrim, if he hears
The bell that seems to mourn the dying day,
Slackens his pace and sighs, and those he loved
Loves more than ever ! ”

when the world is veiled by the mantle of the young night ; there, walking to and fro for some moments, he wrestled with a noble rebellious spirit against the unlawful passion that vultured upon his heart. It was a lovely night; not a breath was stirring.—The air, a chartered libertine, was still. It was a scene “ where all, save the spirit of man, was divine ! ”

Wearied with the tumult of contending thoughts, Dudley sank against the balustrade; the heaving of his chest—the gasping, as if for breath—betrayed the fierce struggle within his breast ! So abstracted was he, that he was not aware of the approach of a footstep until he

felt a hand gently touching his shoulder. Turning round, he beheld Constance ! In a dejected tone she addressed him :—

“I fear you are ill—nay, worse than you would confess.”

Dudley raised his head, and looked wildly at her.

“It is in vain that I struggle,” said he, hurried into utterance by the scene, his passion, and her presence. “You know not the sad madness of my heart ; the agony of a broken spirit ! despise me ! chide me ! spurn me ! Constance, I love you !”

She stood as one paralysed, but her whole air, her very statue-like stillness told the tale. So stood her namesake in the beautiful *statuary* description of Scott in Marmion :—

“When thus her face was given to view,
(Although so pallid was her hue,
It did a ghastly contrast bear
To those bright ringlets glistering fair,)
Her look composed, and steady eye,
Bespoke a matchless constancy.

And there she stood, so calm and pale,
That, but her breathing did not fail,
And motion slight of eye and head,
And of her bosom, warranted
That neither sense nor pulse she lacks,
You might have thought a form of wax,
Wrought, to the very life, was there,
So still she was, so pale, so fair."

By an irresistible impulse Dudley seized her hand, and raised it to his lips.

"Spare me!" she cried, now trembling and terrified, "Spare me! think! think of my husband! let me not forget or be forgotten."

"Say that you—say that you—do not—hate me! say that you feel for me and all my misery."

He continued to retain her hand—with tears she urged him to leave her; and suddenly, as with a convulsive effort, she exclaimed—

"Oh save me, save me!"

"Speak, I conjure you! say you forgive—say only that you do not hate me!—say only—"

Constance withdrew her hand. He paused,—but no reply. Her sobs showed the deep wretchedness of her heart.

“Beloved Constance!” said Dudley, with inexpressible tenderness, and bending at her feet.

“Rise, Mr. Ravensworth,” replied Constance, her lip quivering;—“I beseech you to say no more; my heart is too full for words! I throw myself upon your clemency —your generosity! Indulge not in an erring passion,—deserve my regard,—my respect,—my affection,—my sisterly affection! —and, as you value *that*, breathe not another word!” She stood like one winged at once above her late tempest of the feelings, and was herself recovered!

Dudley stood appalled by her manner; at length, by a violent effort, he mastered himself; and with a deep but imploring voice, said, —“Forgive all that has caused you this! I will stifle,—I will subdue

my feelings ! Henceforth, acknowledge me only as a friend."

Clasping her hands, and repressing with firmness the tears that would have come into her eyes, Constance exclaimed, with earnestness, — "I conjure you, for *your* sake, — for *my* sake, struggle against this fatal error. May we both be forgiven ! You have my prayers, my best and purest wishes: but, by your hopes in Heaven, swear never again — ”

"Most solemnly do I swear !" interrupted Dudley. "You will then be my friend, my true friend, my adviser, my guide ? "

"I will, — I will !" faltered Constance, in a relapsing tone. "And you will aid me then to act rightly ? Strength will be given to us to submit to our worldly separation."

"May Heaven guide you !" replied Dudley. "By nobly supporting yourself you will keep me from sinking."

"Go, — go, now !" said Constance.—Dud-

ley saw the struggle of conflicting emotions, he felt that they both stood on the brink of an abyss.—He remembered his words, and, with a hurried step, rushed from the balcony.

At this moment the voice of Lord Atherley was heard at the window. Constance, pale and thoughtful, entered the conservatory. As she approached the drawing-room she felt that all eyes would be upon her; but, fortunately, Miss Sowerby, who called herself a *fanatica per la musica*, — and who certainly was thoroughly versed in all the theories of bars, minims, quavers, and crotches — was at that moment “splitting the ears of the groundlings,” by executing a difficult sonata of Hummel’s on the piano-forte. The more the piece became intricate the more she hammered away at the keys, crossing her hands with wonderful dexterity, — her flying fingers running up the half-notes with most marvellous rapidity ; un-

til, at last, a final crash pronounced the ivory rhapsody over !

“ Dear Lady Atherley ! I must beg that you will favour us with that most beautiful song, ‘ In Infancy our hopes and fears.’ ”

Constance pleaded a cold,—the instrument out of tune. During these apologies Miss Sowerby was preparing for another “ piece of music.”

Dudley now entered the drawing-room, and, in the expectation of hearing Constance sing, placed himself near the piano-forte.

“ Oh, Mr. Ravensworth ! how inexplicably kind it would be if you would but turn over the leaves of the music-book,” said Miss Sowerby, in a most beseeching manner ; — then adding, in a softer tone, “ You know it requires such a good eye and ear ! ”

Ravensworth made a profound bow ; he did not dare to look towards what he

most wished to see ; and, fixed to the piano-forte, he bore his martyrdom with becoming patience.

Lord Atherley, from time to time, cast a glance at Constance, then at Dudley ; evidently surprised at her absent and confused manner. Unable longer to endure this torture, and anxious to escape from further observation, she consented to play. Ravensworth brought her music-books, and they looked them over together.

“ If you are very kind,” said he, “ you will play one of the quadrilles we danced last night ; let me enjoy them over again.” Lady Atherley complied. “ What pleasure it is to hear an air again, which has once made us happy ! ” Constance looked up for a moment, coloured slightly, and played something else. Lord Atherley approached her.

“ You seem fatigued, my love, it ’s getting late ; — as you don’t eat supper, had you not

better retire?" She took a candle, and as she passed the door Dudley's eyes met hers; he nearly upset the music-stand.

"O Mr. Ravensworth!" shrieked Miss Sowerby,—he turned again,—Constance was gone! She retired to her room, and held communion with herself. What though the powerful passion was but in its youth of danger, she knew the nature of that passion, and the constitution of the human heart too well, to hope for its death, while daily nourished by the presence of its object: and she already dreaded the fatal effects of its being permitted even to exist.

The society of Dudley had ever possessed for her the greatest charm; there was a similarity in their tastes; she had entered into his feelings,—she had loved him as a brother; now for the first time she was made conscious of the unbounded influence she had over his mind. The thought was madness! she shuddered when she looked back to the meshes that had

been woven to entangle her into her present fate ; still she consoled herself at the idea that they were soon to separate,—and in the weakness of her reason, she trusted that in the giddy vortex of society forgetfulness might come to both. How little do the would-be-prudent know that love's first handmaid is memory !

The early spring wore away in drives, rides, excursions, fêtes,—April sobbed and cried itself out,—May came, and though the appointed period had now arrived for the dispersion of the Avesford party, the majority of General Dunbar's guests were too happily established to think of departure. There is no place where people know so much of each other, as in a country house ; there the minds and dispositions of the party develope themselves freely and naturally. All restraint and coldness seem thrown off, and life appears charmed from its duplicities and disappointments. English women never appear so delightful as in a country house ; the

mansion is at once by their presence hallowed into home; and they, seceding happily and sweetly from the retinue of fashion,—become on the instant mothers and daughters, unalloyed sisters and friends.

But the first drawing-room had been announced; the newsman had blown his first summoning court trumpet; fashion beckoned to her startled minions anew; and London announced its spring-claim to be re-peopled; carriages with rumbles crept out into the light; servants thronged the halls, well “girt for travel;” horses were put to; the hearts of ladies’-maids beat responsive to those of the gentlemen’s gentleman at the back of the carriage: avenues were whirled past; and the house of Avesford was left untenanted, to listen but to the monotonous building-rook, and the solitary passing winds!

CHAPTER VII.

LADY AATHERLEY IN LONDON.

Society is smoothed to that excess,
That manners hardly differ more than dress.
Professions, too, are no more to be found
Professional, and there is nought to cull
Of folly's fruit ; for though your fools abound,
They 're barren, and not worth the pains to pull.
Society is now one polished horde,
Formed of two mighty tribes, the *Bores* and *Bored*.

BYRON.

THE summer, as Horace Walpole, that emperor of *old china*, says, “ had set in with its usual severity,” and it was now the height of the season. London was thronged with

the votaries of fashion and pleasure; Bond Street was crowded with male and female loungers; the squares and fashionable streets were nightly illuminated by the blaze of flambeaux; the cries of the watchmen were overpowered by the more powerful clamour of rolling carriages. Dudley was first hurried into the stream, and then whirled on into the very vortex of fashion; then began the murmurs of envy and the gratulations of the friendly: admired by those whose approbation gave the stamp of fashion, he was yet “damn'd with faint praise” by those who were less masters in the circle. We have already described him as a tall handsome boy, nor had his manhood “unbeseemed the promise of his spring.” “*Avec les hommes l'amour entre par les yeux, avec les femmes par les oreilles;*” now, under either of these circumstances, Dudley would have been successful; for though not “the handsome man” that would have captivated the milliners in a

country town, his appearance was singularly prepossessing, and he interested the feelings of all by the thrilling tone of his voice, the penetrating glance or melancholy gaze of his eye, the sense that was stamped upon his features and was shown in his conversation. It may be easily imagined, that, with his natural gifts of mind and person, and with the advantages of good family, he was likely to be a man of note in any society. He possessed a figure tall and athletic, symmetrical and active; a manly and intelligent countenance, and was an Englishman in heart and soul. His attention was not easily or lightly to be attracted, or readily won; but once having fixed his regards he was firm, confiding, and incapable of change. His manners, too, had that peculiar felicity, that while they were full of cheerfulness and freedom they enjoyed the power of instantly suppressing the slightest trespass of offensive familiarity. With a happy turn of expression, Gibbon, in his *Memoirs*, has styled this

quality, not more valuable than creditable to private dignity, “the invisible line, protective of virtue and good sense;” or, to use Byron’s words, it is one

“That checks low mirth but lacks not courtesy.”

It was thus that Dudley won his way in the House of Commons, into a general popularity, founded upon the conviction of almost every party, that though a determined supporter of legitimate and constitutional government, he was an enemy to abuses and a dispassionate friend to civil liberty; a zealous and upright defender of the church; and while he firmly maintained the purity of its doctrines against the errors of superstition, as bravely exerted himself to protect it from the moody chimeras of bigotry or the contagious taint of intolerance. Nothing could be more delightful and inspiriting than his strain of eloquence; his thoughts seemed to breathe, his words to burn; the clearness of his concep-

tion, the acuteness of his reasoning,— the classical lore which he called to his aid in imagery, enlivened by an occasional brilliant snatch of wit,— his persuasive impressive tone, would have made many converts, were it not that members notoriously realise the passage in *Hudibras*,

“ He that complies against his will,
Is of his own opinion still.”

It was not long before a situation in the Treasury was offered to him; independently of his wish to be unfettered he had an innate horror of the official drudgery of pacing Whitehall, lighting a taper in Downing Street, and yawning over debates five nights out of seven, when called upon to make a house under the roof and the stifling atmosphere of St. Stephen's. His heart was ardent, liberal and benevolent; sincere and earnest in his friendships, and scorning disguise, he bared his faults as well as his virtues to every eye. His

rich, mental acquirements gave him indeed a weight and influence in public affairs, and his strict integrity of principle gave a solidity to this influence.

July, the month of heat and sunshine, of clear skys and dusty roads, was now on its thirty-one days' tour. All was dissipation, folly and selfishness, a scene of racket from morning till night,—a perpetual hurry, a constant bustle. The world,—the town world, was hurrying and crowding, as though it were endeavouring to mob itself to death; the epidemic of frivolity was “very much about.” Not a moment’s leisure for reflection had life; all was gaiety, feasting, music, dancing, and playing at making love. The parks and streets were thronged with carriages; the Opera, Almack’s, park, gardens, dinner parties, concerts, excursions to Richmond, and fêtes to Greenwich—to eat minnows done in lard, at thirty shillings per head:—all were rife; the Athereleys entered warmly into the dissipations of

the season. Every newspaper recorded the names of Lord and Lady Atherley as guests at the most illustrious tables, or as doing the honours of Grosvenor Square to the *élite* of the fashionable world. Lord Atherley enjoyed the evident admiration Lady Atherley excited ; nor was she ignorant of or unelated by it. It is absurd to talk of the unconsciousness of admiration ; no handsome woman is, or can be unconscious of it ; no one can be indifferent to it. The satisfaction of finding that the impression she makes upon the world is a pleasing one,—that it cultivates a favourable prepossession, must be irresistibly gratifying, even to a mind untinged with vanity.

Lady Atherley soon became initiated into the lapsing hours of a London life ; her mornings were spent *selon les règles* of a fashionable lady's morning ; leaving cards, shopping, (that joy of joys,) and above all, driving about without an object, beyond Hookham and Mitchell's. To be sure, she has to enquire for the

last new novel, and latest waltz at Chappells : are her missions complete ? — No, she has to receive in at the window of her carriage a bottle of perfume from Rigge's — a ribbon from Redmayne's ; to leave a *flacon* to be filled at Godfrey's, — a watch to be called for at Vieyres ; — then follows a visit to the Western Exchange, prolonged into a drive through Bond Street, Pall Mall, Piccadilly and St. James's Street ; ending with the park. There, after a funereal pace in search of air through dust, “the wearied heart is *driven*, — to wander home.”

To an inexperienced mind there is no situation in life that appears to possess so many advantages as matrimony ; it is the *foundation* of *sand* on which so many of the young and romantic of both sexes have ever erected their temples to happiness. In young hearts, happiness as naturally responds to marriage, as though it were its true rhyme — the love, to answer to dove. Every comedy ends with a

marriage; every romance, after the heroine has surmounted the dangers of lawless banditti, ghostly apparitions, and long imprisonments, concludes with the union of the thoroughly harassed hero and the “lovely sufferer.” These animated descriptions of Hymeneal happiness would be more often allied to reality than fiction, if men wooed without masked hearts,—“plainly told their love,” fairly displayed the extent of their regard to interest; and if women *would be* women in the presence of their future husbands, and would throw aside the heroine, and all its fine arts; if the qualities of the mind,—the disparities of age, understanding, and temper, were more attentively considered. How strong and fearfully forcible, is the description of the state of matrimony in Molière’s *L’Avare*; he says, “Il est vrai que votre fille vous peut représenter que le mariage est une plus grande affaire qu’on ne peut croire; qu’il y va d’être heureux ou malheureux toute sa vie; et qu’un engagement

qui doit durer jusqu'à la mort ne se doit jamais faire, qu'avec des grandes précautions ; qu'en de telles occasions l'inclination d'une fille est une chose, sans doute, où l'on doit avoir de l'égard ; et que cette grande inégalité d'âge, d'humeur, et de sentiments, rend un mariage sujet à des accidents très fâcheux." But it is unfortunately the fate of mankind, that while they blind their reason and discretion, to form the most brilliant expectations, they afterwards, alas ! become angry and disconcerted, because these visionary hopes have never failing wings, and stay not ! then follow dejection and exaggerated ills, and all the gloomy scenes of life which disappointment colours. How prone are we to reverse Desdemona's test, and to see beauty's *mind* in the *visage*.

Of the truth of all this Lord Atherley was an unfortunate living example ; after he had been married a few months, he began gradually to manifest the natural tendency of his disposi-

tion : after the fleetest of moons, the honeymoon, had withdrawn its light from the heart, and cold every-day life, with its retinue of regular feelings, took possession of the mind as its common mansion, the confidence of familiarity soon wore away the first bloom of obsequious politeness in the timid lover. He, by not slow degrees, learned that the matrimonial state was not unattended by innumerable vexatious cares ; and (“ Oh shame, oh sorrow, and oh womankind ! ”) that his wife was not utterly, unalterably, that perfect creature his imagination had represented her to be.

Lord Atherley was proportionably dispirited, every trivial circumstance added not a little to his petty trials ; he fancied Lady Atherley did not submit with becoming deference to his opinions, and did not erect him into an idol ! He worried her with trifles, but trifles make up the sum of life ; and daily experience proves that a series of minute annoyances are even more trying to the temper than great and

single misfortunes. Gulliver was subdued by the myriad of little arrows which the Lilliputians let fly at him on all sides, when he could have crushed the whole army at once, if embodied and set fairly before him.

Lord Atherley had gradually become more harsh and irritable; his fits of violence and impatience were worse than ever; he seldom spoke. His principal occupation was to sit with the newspaper in his hand, studying it according to the well-bred custom of Englishmen; he would often speak rudely to Constance in Ravensworth's presence,—in short, he was one of that class of husbands:—“*Ils s'étaient habitués à regarder leurs femmes comme des meubles propres et luisans qui faisaient honneur à leur maison, et qui n'exigeaient aucun frais d'entretien.*”

Lady Atherley strove to hide the pangs which the gradual discovery of her husband's character occasioned her; but she strove in vain. Without a free and reciprocal commu-

nication of thought, all power of sufferance and of social communion must fail. What was the gloom in the mind of Constance, when she awoke to her fate and found herself the wife of a frigid egotist? Lord Atherley, wholly unaccustomed to seek or secure entertainment from studious occupation, became listless, and remained for hours lounging about the house. His first cheerfulness had forsaken him; for days Constance watched in silent anxiety the clouded countenance of her husband. "Oh, my Lord, beware of jealousy!" Captiousness and irritability (for no man ever owns he is slave to the green devil), had, like melancholy, "marked him for their own;" his *amour propre* had been wounded, and to his jealousy was attached a degree of cunning, which, while he attempted to conceal it, was so flimsily veiled as to become apparent to the eyes of the most casual observer.

In short, every act of Lady Atherley's, however innocent, was, by a distorted and self-

scorpioed mind, considered as a proof of guilt ; he feared the world's ridicule, he had not courage to withstand “the world's dread laugh, which scarce the firm philosopher can scorn,” and though he tried to be courteous, his manner to Dudley was reserved ; “his mind had grown suspicion's sanctuary,” and where doubt has once entered it is not possible to preserve the judgment unbiassed. Every indifferent glance that Ravensworth cast upon the pensive countenance of Constance was noticed by her husband as a look of affection ; and every word he uttered to her was construed into an utterance of attachment. What says the great human searcher of all human character ?—“Suspicion entering with a serpent's fang poisons the healthy mind ; a jaundiced eye henceforth will look upon each trifling act, and turn it into evil.”

Lord Atherley became austere in his demeanour towards his wife, and betrayed his ill-humour by sneers and sarcastic remarks upon

the strange fancies of London fine ladies for handsome men. One day when, in a reproachful mood, he taunted Lady Atherley with preferring the society of others to his own, and accumulated sundry little trifles “light as air,” as the foundation of an argument between them, Lady Atherley replied with some asperity, and they quarrelled. Harassed and comfortless, Lady Atherley passed the remainder of the day in painful forebodings ; her weeping eyes and disordered state of mind unfitted her for any meeting ; and she retired early to her own chamber, “to commune with her own heart,” and to meditate upon her situation. Her duties, and her calls for exertion,—her husband’s worse than undisguised indifference,—his cruel suspicions, were more than she could bear; yet he must not know how painful were the tears she had shed, while she bitterly lamented the rashness and hopelessness of her engagement. Conscience, that unerring guide, pointed out to her, that the

first step demanded by honour was to give up all intercourse with Dudley. On the impulse of the moment she seized a pen, and wrote the following hurried sentences:—

“We must now be as strangers. *You* must not seek *me*, *I* must avoid *you* — everywhere ! be generous, and relieve me from a perplexity that tortures me. May you be happy !”

At this moment she was startled by a knock at her door, and Lord Atherley entered with a grave authoritative air.

“Lady Atherley,” he said, in a severe tone, “I have long and painfully witnessed your conduct with regard to Mr. Ravensworth. I forbore to mention it sooner, from a mistaken tenderness for your feelings, but duty now compels me to speak on this painful subject ; and though I feel the greatest confidence in your fidelity,—that conviction will not prevent suspicions injurious to your character in others. Many malignant insinuations and monstrous inventions have been spread abroad, and I have

anonymous advisers who appear to take a great interest in our miseries. I hope, with your assistance, to allay the storm, and put an end to the cruel reports. Your character has been assailed,—calumnies have been heaped upon you, appearances have unfortunately been against you,—but even now, much may be done to set you right in the eyes of the world."

"And imagine not," replied Constance,—strangely sustained yet deeply affected, "that I brave that censure; and yet the consciousness of the rectitude of my conduct"—

"Very true, Lady Atherley," interrupting her, "if all judged you as justly as I do; but when enemies"—

"Enemies!" exclaimed Constance amazed, "surely, Lord Atherley, you are not serious; I may have failed to create friends, but what have I done to make enemies?"

"The world, my dear, will be censorious; few escape; and the woman who breaks through

the rules which public opinion and custom have established, and who does not shrink from even the appearance of guilt,—must in time lose *all* claim to respect. One step alone remains; *your* honour, *my* honour demand it! you must wholly give up the society of Mr. Ravensworth.” For a few moments Constance stood stupefied.

“ Does slander dare to—” here she checked herself, and with an expression of kindness continued, “ Atherley, dear Atherley, I submit to your judgment, — to your opinion, — to your guidance,” she held out her hand, and pressed his tenderly. Then, overwhelmed with grief, burst into tears.

“ Constance,” said Lord Atherley, with as much feeling as he was capable of indulging in, and yet there was exulting triumph mingled with it, “ you must be cheerful now you are going to do all that is right. But, love, *we shall be late for dinner.*” Here he rose, serenely pressed her hand, and left her ; for some

time she remained in silent abstraction, then, rising with firmness said, “He is right,—I ought not to see him any more!” The path of duty was straight before her ; in tears and humility of spirit she prayed for strength to follow it. In doing what she judged to be right, she felt she would bring comfort to her husband’s home and her own heart.

Lord Atherley still wished the world to think he was above suspicion. If a note was delivered to his wife, instead of a direct question, he would insidiously ask whether it was from her cousin Mary, trusting the answer would satisfy his curiosity ; if he asked Dudley to dinner, which he did occasionally, to avoid the scandal so abrupt a termination of their acquaintance would create,—he was careful to get some one of greater rank, that Lady Atherley might not fall to Dudley’s lot. When called out by business, he requested his “dear Constance not to admit any visitors, as he would shortly return and take her out, and people

stayed so long." He selected the Tuesday and Thursday nights for the opera, in the hopes that the House of Commons would keep all vexatious intruders away from his box ; his great *coup de maître*, however, was the manner in which he ascertained who had called during the day : to accomplish this, he made a point of asking during dinner, when the servants were present, and there was a dead silence, " whom she had seen ? " By this manœuvre Lady Atherley, had she been so inclined, could not have screened her morning visitors ; accidental and trifling circumstances occurred constantly to make Lord Atherley's doubts " confirmations strong as proofs of Holy Writ."

Lady Atherley was sitting for her picture, and one morning, when he had left her at the artist's in Newman-street, and had just turned into Oxford-street, a dark cabriolet whirled along with the speed of lightning and drew up near the door of the artist ; the groom sprang to the head, and a gentleman alighted. It was

impossible to discern his features, his figure was that of Ravensworth ; nor was it quite clear into which house he had gone as there were many doors open,—solicitor's offices, artists', &c. Lord Atherley returned,—passed the cabriolet, and recognised Dudley's crest ; pacing up and down the street, considering what steps he should take, he was met by Colonel Serle.

“ Ah ! Atherley ; of all others you are the man I wished to see.”

Lord Atherley tried to escape. “ A most pressing appointment,—I—”

“ Nonsense, my dear fellow,” replied the Colonel, “ I am now going to the Clarendon ; Salarne, who Jacquier swears is a regular *cordon bleu*, awaits me ; he has prepared a *déjeûner à la fourchette*, and I must have your opinion.”

At that moment Lady Atherley's carriage was called up.

“ Ah ! Lady Atherley,” said the Colonel, taking Lord Atherley's arm, and crossing the

street, “allow me to put you in your carriage.”

“Are you going home, my dear?” asked her sposo.

“I was thinking of taking a walk in the Park, it will, perhaps, get rid of my headache.”

“Do, my dear,” replied Lord Atherley, who, fancying Ravensworth still in safe conference with his lawyer or artist, thought it an excellent opportunity for Lady Atherley to indulge in a walk in the park, which at other times he opposed.

“I will,” said Constance.

“The park”—“park!” echoed the footman. The carriage drove off.

Taking Colonel Serle’s arm, and saying,—“Well, after all, this is the legitimate time for eating”—the *gourmets* wended their way towards Bond Street; they had not proceeded far, when the same dark cabriolet overtook them.

"Ah, Bibury!" exclaimed Colonel Serle; "where's Ravensworth?"

"Why," replied the slang exquisite, "we started together in his cab; but as that old town tabby, Lady Babbleford's coachman, said of his load,—'I shot my rubbish in the park.' I then went to Kirkby's to see my picture of "Ariel," he has hit off George Dockeray admirably;—Dudley's a devil of a fellow for the *ladies'* plate; he said he was going to try a horse, a filly I think,—has some appointment I have no doubt. He makes terrible running, generally wins in a canter; I'm to pick them up in an hour at Kensington Gate. Ah! Lord Atherley, saw your drag in Newman Street,—clever near side horse; what's the figure?"

Lord Atherley made no reply, he now felt himself to be in what Mrs. Trollope would call "an unhandsome fix." By his own manœuvring he had sent his wife into the lion's jaws. He consoled himself first, for we are

bound to give the d——l all his due, that they might not meet ; and, secondly, with the prospect of a *cotelette panée*. Plutarch says, “ little circumstances show the real man better than things of greater moment ; ” we have, therefore, entered into these minute details, to place Lord Atherley’s character in its proper light before our readers.

CHAPTER VIII.

MEETING IN THE PARK.

— Sincerity !

Thou first of virtues ! let no mortal leave
Thy onward path, although the earth should gape,
And from the gulph of hell destruction cry,
To take dissimulation's winding way.—DOUGLAS.

— Those vegetable puncheons
Call'd “ Parks,” where there is neither fruit nor flower
Enough to gratify a bee's slight munchings ;
But after all it is the only “ bower ”
(In Moore's phrase) where the fashionable fair
Can form a slight acquaintance with fresh air.—BYRON.

WE must now retrace our steps to *the park*, so called *par excellence*. Hyde Park, now a royal demesne, was part of the ancient manor of Hida, which belonged to St. Peter's monastery, Westminster, until the reign of Henry

the Eighth, when it became the property of the crown.

Paris boasts her Champs Elysées and Bois de Boulogne ; Madrid, her far-famed Prado ; Rome, her Corso ; Naples, her Mola and Strada di Toledo ; Vienna, her Prater, and Glacis : within our own islands, Dublin has her Phœnix Park, and Edinburgh her King's Park ; but for magnificence of equipage and beauty of human face and form, there is no promenade in Europe that comes up to Hyde Park.

It was one of those clear, fine, lovely summer days (out of the three hundred and sixty-five of east wind, mist, and fog, that we generally enjoy in our metropolis), that “like angels' visits, few and far between,” come to gladden us with sunshine and brightness ; a sluggish stream of carriages two and three abreast, coroneted panels in abundance, troops of noble equestrians of both sexes, some thousands of pedestrians, crowds of young, elegant, and beautiful women, obsequiously attended by brilliant

beaux ; and lords and ladies were as “ plenty as blackberries.”

To return to Lady Atherley, who anxious to avoid the crowd had turned her steps towards Kensington Gardens ; she had not, however, proceeded far in her walk when the sound of a horse startled her ; turning round, the first object that met her eyes was Dudley Ravensworth on horseback ; he immediately alighted. Constance’s heart flushed upon her countenance, a thousand contending feelings agitated her. She endeavoured, however, to command a fortitude for the explanation she was meditating, for since the harassing conversation of the preceding day Lady Atherley could not entirely shake off certain feelings of alarm ; availing herself then of this accidental opportunity, she determined to speak seriously to Ravensworth respecting the injurious suspicions and the ill-natured inferences that would be drawn by the world from their extreme intimacy.

Dudley now joined Constance, he looked at her with melancholy interest; he could not help observing how greatly she was altered, how much some wearing grief had impaired the graceful beauty of her form: they met in silence. Although deeply agitated, Constance was the first who spoke: "You have taken me by surprise," she said; "I had not the slightest idea of meeting you."

"I fear," replied Dudley, "that the abruptness of my appearance has disturbed you;" then, taking her listless yet nervous hand into his, added, "I have heard of your sufferings—I felt you were miserable."

"Alas, Dudley!" replied Constance, almost overpowered with her agitation, "your presence redoubles my terror and my grief."

"Constance! dearest Constance! listen to me; my feelings for you remain unchanged!"

"Dudley, you must not use that language; remember all we have suffered, all I have endured. Forget me, if I must respect you and myself."

"Never! never can I while I breathe!" passionately answered Ravensworth.

Constance was silent. They trod for a few minutes but to "the echo of their feet."

At length he asked her, with as much calmness as he could assume, "If she was happy, and whether there was aught he could do to render her more so?"

"You ask me if I am happy—do I look so? Yet I am not, or ought not to be unhappy; but even if I were so, you would not expect me to allow to any one that which I would scarcely confess to myself."

There was a long pause again, for Dudley felt how painful it must be to awaken recollections of the past. At length he said, "You have told me without intending it. Oh! your sadness, your pallid cheek, declining health, your languid eye, tell me, tell all the world, you are not happy. I know it, Constance! I know all that has passed, as well as all the former events of your life. Nothing which

concerns you is unknown to me, because nothing which affects you is indifferent to me."

Constance proceeded, — "When I married Lord Atherley—before I was eighteen, he many years older than myself—I did it of my own free consent; and therefore, if I have not met with the similarity of tastes and pursuits I might have found in a younger man, I have no one to accuse but myself."

"Alas!" said Dudley, "is it come to this?"

"One reflection I have," she continued, "that I have never yet, in thought, word, or deed, failed in my duty as a wife; and while that consciousness remains I can never feel *unhappy!*" She fell into a melancholy pause, which Dudley was apprehensively averse to disturb. "Lord Atherley is in some respects the kindest of husbands! I ought to be happy!" This assertion she reiterated with a sigh.

"Grant me but one last interview," said Dudley, hurriedly.

"No, ask me not," tremblingly replied Constance in a subdued voice.

"On my honour," said Dudley, with earnestness, "you may trust a sad yet earnest heart."

"Ask me not, I implore you! you are unkind, ungenerous," said Constance.

"Indeed," replied Dudley, with warmth, "you wrong me!"

"Forgive me—leave me; for your sake, for my sake, for both our sakes, I must not, dare not, meet you," said Constance.

Dudley was too deeply mortified at his altered prospects, too disappointed at the future, and the effect it produced on Constance's mind as well as upon his own, to venture any further expression of his feelings on the subject. He strove to speak of other things, of his journey, of foreign politics, of—, but suddenly, the effort being too great for him, he exclaimed, "Farewell, Constance! we must now part; one line I will write before I leave England. Heaven bless you!" At that instant Lady Atherley's

carriage drew up, and, without a word, she entered it.

Just as Ravensworth had put Lady Atherley into the carriage, up drove a hackney-coach to Kensington Gate ; for, in those days, hack-cabs and flies were not in existence, and the public had no opportunity of enjoying an hour's danger for eightpence. Before the coachman could get from his box—indeed, before the rumbling vehicle had been completely “brought-to,” the door was opened from within, the steps rattled down, and Lord Atherley, flushed and excited, alighted. “Heigh, heigh, heigh !” cried he, hallooing, “stop, stop!” running as fast as his legs could carry him. He would have found it labour in vain, had not a butcher’s boy considerately called to the coachman, “You’ve left part of your live lumber behind !” The carriage stopped ; Lord Atherley, panting and blowing like a porpoise, was soon at the door ; it was opened, and, with only a hope “that he should not crowd Lady Ather-

ley," he entered, to the discomfiture of his *sposa*, whose feet, "those feet, those little feet, which once he thought so pretty," received the weight of a high-heeled spurred boot. Lord Atherley looked daggers; but, finding looks had no effect, he had no scruple in upbraiding his wife for the duplicity, levity, and impropriety of her conduct in thus making an appointment with Dudley.

Constance asserted her innocence: the discussion ended, like the generality of discussions, in mutual anger and alienation. In the mean time, the owner of coach No. 1526, having had the precaution to ascertain from the waiter at the Clarendon Hotel who his "fare" was, remained patiently *at* a stand *off* the stand, knowing full well that a good waiting job would suit both his own pocket and his "oses'" comfort. About half-past nine in the evening the butler entered the drawing-room to inform Lord Atherley, who was not in the best of humours, and who had

settled himself for the evening, having kicked off his boots, enveloped himself in his *robe de chambre*, and thrust his weary feet into his slippers, that the hackney-coachman wished to know whether he was to wait.

"Wait!" replied he; "who? what?" and sending him in his wishes to a place that,— "Oh, no we never mention it!" at least to ears polite.

"The man says he took your Lordship from the Clarendon Hotel to Kensington Gate, where he left you, my Lord. Eight hours, and he claims eighteen shillings."

"Pay the scoundrel," cried the testy nobleman impatiently, "and take the swindler's number."

During the remainder of that night Lord Atherley was far from being an agreeable companion; suffering under a heavy accumulation of fidgets, he was in the most uncomfortable state of perplexity. He now bitterly repented his precipitation in hurrying Lady Atherley

to the Park. He writhed under the mortifying reflection that he had fallen into his own trap. He was angry with everything and everybody ; with Ravensworth, for being the cause of his present excited and irritated feelings, with Lady Atherley, for aiding and “abetting in the same,” and, in no slight degree, with himself, for his *bête ism*. His first feeling was to address a letter to Ravensworth. He sought his writing materials, a sputtering and splitting of pens was heard, but no nibbing : he scribbled a few hasty lines, then attempted to light a taper from a phosphorus box ; a dozen matches were tried, but in the haste all failed, leaving, however, a pleasing atmosphere of sulphur, as though to suit the state of his mind. He jumped up to ring the bell for a candle. There is no better criterion of the state of a man’s temper than the manner in which he rings a bell. The bell-rope came off in Lord Atherley’s hand, having accomplished, however, a peal that must have disturbed the

whole house, and would have delighted what bell-ringers call “a college youth.” The panting servant opened the door, imagining, at least, that the house or his master must be on fire. It was only the latter. Lord Atherley ordered a candle, and subsequently, in his haste and anger, dropped the burning wax upon his fingers; the pain elicited such an anathema on the wax, that we think it better to hand it over to Mr. Sterne’s blotting angel of a Recorder, than insert it here.

“Have you burnt yourself, Atherley?” inquired Constance, with kindness.

“Most ——— ?” replied the sposo, adding that reprehensible adverb which was uttered by a noble Bard to his Bardess, when, in the midst of the workings of the brain, she asked tenderly “If she bored him?” .

For hours Lord Atherley paced the apartment as though endued with the undiscovered discovery of perpetual motion, opening and shutting the doors, throwing up and down the

windows, walking backwards and forwards, taking hasty pinches of snuff, doing, in fact, everything which irritable gentlemen do when not in the best tempers, and, finally, ending by destroying the note he had taken so much trouble to write.

CHAPTER IX.

DUDLEY'S LETTER.

“ But I do see you are moved.
I am to pray you, not to strain my speech
To grosser issues nor to larger reach,
Than to suspicion.”

Othello.

On l'a dit, la manie d'écrire a perdu tous les amans. C'est par là qu'ils périssent tous. De tous les confidens le papier est le plus dangereux, le plus indiscret, le plus perfide. Les amans le croient leur ami, il n'est jamais que leur délateur. C'est toujours lui qui les dénonce et les livre à leurs ennemis naturels.

Marianna—par M. JULES SANDEAU.

SUCH is the deception practised on us by our own hearts, that, although their pulses may beat at the approach,—the senses thrill with emotion at the touch,—the “timid

eye" glisten at the sight of the beloved object; yet, until circumstances have assured us of the reality, still wilfully do we believe ourselves uninfluenced by passion! Many an hour did Constance mentally review her past conduct: at last she acquired a courage to address the following letter to Ravensworth.

"I implore you to awaken yourself from the infatuation of the present moment!—you are but too fatally securing to both a mutual misery. Leave this country—I urge, I entreat it! What gratification could it be to you,—what consolation to me,—to meet under such altered circumstances?—to meet with the coldness of strangers?—to feel restrained from the power of conversation,—from the consciousness that all eyes are upon us?—No! it would be misery: better, far, to part till time has trained us to indifference, than to be near and yet estranged.

"C. A."

Grosvenor Square.

When Dudley received the letter he read it over and over, and was haunted by a thousand varying and conflicting emotions. Love would now struggle for mastery—and would now be driven down by a tender recollection of Constance's pure claim upon his unselfishness and negative protection. Amidst every change of feeling, he still saw that Constance was unhappy, and he shrunk with anguish when he thought of the cause of her misery; now he thought himself virtue-armed, and resolved to enter her presence without betraying any token of the passion, of which he was but too, too conscious; — in vain would he try to deceive himself, that he could tear himself away for a time, and wean his passion from its object. He could, he thought, prove also the purity and disinterestedness of his subdued though deathless attachment: but it is impossible to describe the tumultuous feelings that "chased one another, like waves of the

deep," through his troubled heart. He seemed hurried to and fro on the ocean of his thoughts, like a wrecked thing.

"He only,—like an ocean weed, upturn,
And loose along the waste of waters borne,—
Was cast companionless, from wave to wave,
On life's rough sea,—and there was none to save!"

To remain now inactive was not in Dudley's power, and he at once determined upon a total change of destination. Before, however, he absented himself from England, for an indefinite period,—perhaps for ever—he, after many woven and unwoven resolves, asked an interview. This final and parting meeting, urged with all the solemnity of a last request, was granted; and the meeting must, of necessity, take place without the knowledge of Lord Atherley. The following afternoon, Lady Atherley's carriage drove up to the door of a fashionable milliner. Ravensworth had, under some pretext, entered the house, with a conscious and tremulous

step. Constance descended from her carriage. “*Monsieur votre frère vous attend,*” said the discreet *Marchande des Modes*. Dudley stood before her:—she spoke; her words were scarcely audible. Racked by contending passions, Ravensworth paced the room until Constance, regaining courage, and anxious to put an end to a scene so painful, with an infirm yet gentle voice addressed him.

“Dudley,” said she; “if it will tend to your happiness to know that you possess my regard, I do not hesitate to utter it—as a friend alone I can preserve you, I have no other sentiment but that of friendship to bestow.”

“Thank you for the kindness with which you have spoken, and for the patience with which you have borne my wayward temper,” said Dudley, touched by the impassioned earnestness of her manner.

“Believe me, I am anxious for your true welfare, that your happiness may not be blighted through me;” here her fortitude failed,

she buried her face in her hands and wept ;
“ don’t speak to me.”

“ I cannot bear to see you give way thus !
come, come, we must have no tears,—you may
be happy yet.”

“ No !” she said, trying in vain to repress
her sobs.

“ Next week,” continued Dudley, “ I leave
England, and”—the voice of Lady Chatfield
—“ Oh, where is Lady Atherley ? I am dying
to see her, I saw her carriage at the door !”
interrupted the conference. Lady Atherley
rushed to the door just as Lady Chatfield had
her hand upon it, and led her into another room.

We do not presume to be nice casuists, or
pronounce upon the conduct of Lady Atherley
in thus consenting to a clandestine meeting.
It is always to be regretted when the voice
of conscience is first neglected, when fear gets
the better of candour, or when we have not
the courage to be openly sincere. The evils
incurred by covert conduct are generally

greater than those which would be endured by perfect confidence. Step by step we enter “ upon the thousand paths that slope the way to crime;” concealment and mistrust between man and wife must ever bring wretchedness to both. But if Lady Atherley’s conscience whispered that she had acted with impropriety towards her husband; if she reproached *herself* for the duplicity she had practised; the pang was blunted by the specious sophistry that she had alleviated, in some degree, the distress of one whose happiness she had trifled with, and who had evinced for her a devotion, fervent, generous, and constant. She convinced herself, by the same false reasoning, that his feeling was the attachment of a brother to a sister,—all purity; that he would never cherish a thought detrimental to her honour, or harbour a wish criminal to the happiness of her husband. And she vowed in future never to have a thought or a wish unconfessed from that husband.

Lord Atherley still continued suspicious, and accident at length produced what seemed a positive confirmation of that turn of mind,

“ Which dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves !”

One morning, when Lord Atherley happened to pass through his wife's dressing-room, by apparent chance a letter caught his eye; the first glance suggested to him the idea that it was the hand-writing of Ravensworth, he examined the superscription, and found that his suspicions were well-founded. To a mind under the influence of blinding prejudice every indifferent circumstance is food for jealousy: determined to gratify his curiosity by the most unworthy means, he snatched up the letter, resolving to defer no longer the satisfaction of his doubts; he tore it open — it was a mere formal commonplace note. Foiled in this his dishonourable attempt, Lord Atherley almost regretted that the worst had not been confirmed to him.

He felt determined to investigate to the uttermost; to relieve or confirm the doubts which haunted his mind. To

“Wear his eye thus,—not jealous nor secure!”

After a few days had passed, Lord Atherley entered Lady Atherley's room, resolved to ransack the thousand nothings that compose a fashionable lady's toilet. It would be more pleasant to the romantic reader were we to say that on this occasion jealousy was the cause of this act of conjugal authority, but truth compels us to acknowledge that a more commonplace motive actuated Lord Atherley, namely, one of vulgar pounds, shillings, and pence; his object being to find a bill and receipt, of which a second demand of payment had been made. After a fruitless search through all the drawers in the bed-room, he entered his wife's dressing-room; this sanctuary bore testimony to Lady Atherley's taste, the furniture was simple and elegant, the

French windows opened into a conservatory ; a profusion of sofas, fauteuils, and ottomans, invited ease ; books carefully selected, Sevre-china, Ormolus, vases, were here in beautiful disorder ; on a causeuse were books, music-paper, notes ; and an album was left carelessly on a table of marquetry. The marble chimney-piece was ornamented with some exquisite bronzes ; and flower-stands, filled with the choicest exotics, scattered around their balmy fragrance. The windows were crowded with the produce of hot-houses, and the myrtle and orange-tree bloomed in all the luxuriance of summer. Objects, indeed, of taste lay scattered in every direction. On a satin cushion reclined at her perfect ease the small King Charles's dog, "Caresse," a gift from Dudley. Once entered in this fairy spot, Lord Atherley soon forgot the object of his mission ; he mechanically opened the book-case ; taking up an album, which he looked into, his wife's maiden name appeared on the bind-

ing; his thoughts reverted to the period when he was a happy bachelor,—when he was the lover only! Lost in a reverie the book fell from his hands, and sundry papers were scattered over the floor; in replacing them the hand-writing of a note attracted his attention, it was addressed to Miss Graham. By what strange neglect this letter had been left in the open pages of an album, we leave to the speculative; but therein it had made a home. Lord Atherley looked at it, and, magnanimously, as he thought, replaced it; but in this act a more important event was brought to light, the envelope of a letter from Dudley to Lady Atherley, which, by an unaccountable omission, she had neglected to destroy, fell at his feet. He looked at the post-mark, the date was that of two days previous. He started — paused — and at length determined to exercise the greatest degree of subtlety and cunning in extracting the truth honestly from his wife. Lady Atherley was

in her morning room; Lord Atherley joined her, and artfully led to the subject.

“It is a long time since we have seen Ravensworth.” When he uttered the name he fixed his eyes upon her; her countenance changed as she replied,—

“It is a long time. How long? Almost a fortnight.”—

“Have you not heard from him?” Her lips formed themselves to say “No,” and half failed. At that instant a gentle tap at the door was heard. Mrs. Viney, the *femme-de-chambre*, entered, and on perceiving Lord Atherley was about to retire, when Lady Atherley inquired what she wanted.

“Please, my lady,” replied the agitated abigail, “John desired me to tell your Ladyship Mr. Ravensworth was in the drawing-room. I went up stairs to your Ladyship’s room.” A word, in a half whisper, half suppressed shudder, escaped his Lordship’s lips. Lord Atherley hurried out of the room, took

his hat, and was about to leave the house, when he suddenly altered his plans and hastily entered the drawing-room. His step was quick, and on his countenance there was a gathering storm. Lady Atherley was conscious, by the irrepressible restlessness of his demeanour, of what was passing in his mind; pride, outraged duty, and justifiable suspicions had resumed their stations in his heart, and his manner to Ravensworth was marked with repulsive coldness. He bowed hastily to him, then, muttering to himself, turned to the window; his heart struggled within him, and it was with the greatest difficulty he could control the passion which almost suffocated him. · Ravensworth, with all the tact of a man of the world, assumed a courteous and ingenuous air in proportion as he saw Lord Atherley's increased dissatisfaction. He was alive to the avoidance of every topic which could by any chance-allusion strike a spark into the train that was laid in the husband's

breast. By degrees Lady Atherley recovered her self-possession; Ravensworth delivered a dozen remarks of nearly the same import and importance, and then took his leave. More than one dull brain has felt the assistance of a snuff-box to recover himself in a dilemma, to enable him to take up the ravelled thread of a discourse, or to divert the vigilance of observation. Lord Atherley, availing himself of this tabac-keep to retire to, nearly emptied his ammunition, which he conveyed with spasmodic energy to its final human cellular tomb.

On the following morning Lady Atherley had to encounter a most stormy breakfast-table; Lord Atherley was sullenly and internally furious under the reminiscence of the previous day's adventure; for though nothing new had transpired to justify his suspicions, nothing seemed to pacify the disturbances of his mind. It was, to use the newspaper phraseology, “magazine day:” he selected a popular sporting one, to which, under a fic-

titious title, he was an occasional contributor, and in which he described feats, “the fantasies of his brain,” of which he was himself the hero. No modern Nimrod, ramrod, or fishing-rod, had ever surpassed his “wonderful leaps, unparalleled runs, extraordinary shots, unequalled fly-fishing.” On turning to the notices to correspondents to see why an account of “an enormous salmon, killed by a celebrated sporting nobleman, not a hundred miles from Compton Audley,” was not inserted, his attention was attracted to the following paragraph:—

“We recommend our fair correspondent, C. A., of Gr—r Sqre., to be more careful in the choice of her letter-box: her note, directed to D. R., Esq., was inadvertently put into our editor’s receptacle, who feeling that he could not with propriety supply the honourable member’s place, forwarded it to its destination. *N.B.*—To prevent further disasters, the two-penny post is next door—No. 38.”

“Humph!” growled Lord Atherley, throwing the magazine towards her: “‘C. A. Grosvenor Square.’ Look, look, Lady Atherley—here—what does this mean, madam?”

As Constance read the fatal notice which revealed her secret, her contending emotions called the blood into her cheeks.

“Really, I know not,” faltered forth Lady Atherley.

“You have,—you have.—Oh, Constance Atherley,” stormed Lord Atherley in a stentorian voice—“you have broken for ever the ties—(of love he was about to say)—the bonds between us.”

Lady Atherley rose to retire, and in a tone so cold and so dignified that Lord Atherley cowered beneath it, said, “I am innocent. I have not wronged you.”

Lord Atherley paused; in an instant his jealous suspicions revived, and, with a scrutinising look and anguished smile, said, “Madam, I shall know all. You must, you shall——”

At this moment their *teté-à-teté* was interrupted by the announcement of Colonel Serle. Constance hastily left the room, conscience-stricken and miserable; she had deceived her husband, and if her lips had not actually uttered a falsehood, they had lent themselves to a subterfuge: to clear herself was impossible, without admitting feelings which she could not bring herself to avow. She had entangled herself in a mystery that degraded her in her own eyes: in despair at the cruel and unfavourable light in which untoward circumstances had placed her, she longed to make a full confession.

The day passed heavily; Lord Atherley had absented himself, and only returned in time for dinner: there were no guests, and the hour, till the servants left the room, passed in silence. Lord Atherley's swollen lip and gloomy eye gave a sure index of strong mental suffering; and in his manner there was everything indicative of the nervous working of jealousy,

wrought upon by the extreme violence of passion : he leaned against the back of his chair, to obtain, if possible, self-possession by compressed bodily repose. The pause was broken by Lord Atherley :—

“ Well, madam, I wait with patience your vindication.” Constance remained silent. Lord Atherley with an oath and additional vehemence said,—

“ Madam, you drive me to vengeance. By heavens, you have deceived me !”

“ Lord Atherley !” replied Constance, “ I have not deserved the charges you have so wantonly brought against me.”

“ Wantonly !” said Lord Atherley in a sarcastic tone,—“ Once more I ask you if it is your intention to vindicate your honour ?”

Constance became more pale than usual ; offended pride wrung her heart, her breast heaved convulsively, and turning her sad expressive eyes towards her husband with indescribable softness and grief,—said “ Though I

may have been indiscreet, I am not guilty ; listen to me calmly, and I will explain to you the motives which have influenced me ; your jealous suspicions have embittered our domestic peace,—for a length of time I have perceived your confidence in me shaken,—you have betrayed distrust of me to the world ; even shown it, in the most humiliating manner, before your servants. This, my innocence could not brook ; and I resolved to urge Mr. Ravensworth to absent himself entirely from us.” These few words softened Lord Atherley ; a feeling of regret succeeded his out-break of anger. Lady Atherley continued, “ As you best know, you have afforded me latterly no opportunity of conversing with him. I was, therefore, driven to the only means left to me.”

There was a fearful conflict in Lord Atherley’s breast ; past times, associations, and feelings arose and fell ; mortified pride, unexorcisable jealousy, struggled fiercely for the mastery : but better, kinder powers at length prevailed,

and softened his nature in the joy with which he hailed the removal of his suspicions. He saw his error ; he had suffered his mind to harbour the most unjust doubts. He had seen Constance humbled, had seen the tears come into her innocent eyes,—and the tempest within him was lulled. As these painful considerations presented themselves to his mind, in vain did he attempt to find some excuse, some palliation for his conduct. In all the bitterness of self-condemnation, he reflected on the harshness of his conduct towards his young wife, and solemnly determined that he would in future study her happiness alone, by dismissing from his imagination those unjust surmises which had so deeply wounded and outraged her feelings.

CHAPTER X.

SIR J. BIDDLECOMBE'S TOWN DINNER.

Great things were now to be achieved at table,
 With massy plate for armour, knives and forks
 For weapons ; but what muse since Homer's able
 (His feasts are not the worst part of his works)
 To draw up in array a single day bill
 Of modern dinners ?

BYRON.

Cook, see all your sauces be sharp and poignant in the palate, that they may commend you ; look to your roast and baked meats handsomely, and what new kickshaws and delicate made things.—BEAUMONT and FLETCHER.

Oh, the long evenings of duets and trios !
 The admirations and the speculations ;
 The “ Mamma Mia's !” and the “ Amor Mio's ! ”
 The “ Tanti palpitis,” on such occasions :
 The “ Lasciamis” and quavering Addio's !
 Amongst our own most musical of nations :
 With “ Tu mi chamas's ” from Portingale
 To soothe our ears, lest Italy should fail.—BYRON.

ON a subsequent morning a card of Brobdignag dimensions was placed upon Ravensworth's breakfast-table,—

“ Sir John and Lady Biddlecombe request the honour of Mr. Ravensworth's company to dinner on Thursday, the 18th.

“ Half-past seven. R. S. V. P.

“ Nottingham-place House.”

This was accompanied by a very small three-cornered, pink-edged, strongly-scented note, that would have made a capital fool's-cap for any idle subject of His Majesty the King of Lilliput: the contents ran as follow:—

“ DEAR MR. RAVENSWORTH,

“ *You senators are so difficult to get, that we have arranged next Thursday three weeks for a small dinner. Do pray give us the pleasure of your company. Au rivoire.*

“ Ce Jeudi.”

“ J. BIDDLECOMBE.

“ P. S. Our friends, the Atherleys, have promised to dine with us. We shall have a little music in the evening.”

As the London season was now hastening to a close, Dudley availed himself of this “forlorn hope” with avidity. The 18th at length arrived, and at a few minutes before eight, Ravensworth drove up to a tolerably sized house, then standing “alone in its glory.” Nottingham-place House, or Nottingham House, as Lady Biddlecombe, to give it a more high sounding name, usually called it,—was situated rather on the antipodes, the *Ultima Thule* of the fashionable world,—occupying the site of the present Nottingham-place.

“Get dinner directly,” said Sir John as Ravensworth was announced,—a delicate species of reproach which all fidgety gentlemen indulge in towards those delinquents who keep them and their viands waiting; a failing, destructive alike of turbot and temper. On entering the room Dudley found a large party assembled; the sun threw a glare upon some dozen middle aged ladies, highly painted, and fantastically dressed, in gaudy turbans, and glittering

under the lustre of their diamond decorations, forming a most formidable circle. In the centre stood Lord Atherley, assuming an attitude before the fire-place, peculiar to Englishmen, though surprising to every other civilised being in all parts of the globe: Lady Atherley was wedged in between two very talkative ladies. The remainder of the gentlemen congregated at the windows, expatiating upon the weather, modern innovations, the East India House, and the change of good old times “when a man could sit down to dinner before night;” all agreeing that nothing was more awful than the half hour before feeding time!

Ravensworth soon discovered that the party was made up of “a mingled yarn,” or as Harry Bibury called it, “well-dressed snobbery and nabobery, yellow-faced gentlemen, and canary-coloured ladies.” On Dudley’s name being announced, a buzz had passed the female coterie.

“Well, *he* is a handsome man—poor Lord Atherley,—gallant gay Lothario!”

One *contretemp* alone occurred. Lady Biddlecombe had invited fourteen to dinner, and, unfortunately, only thirteen were present. Lady B. was as superstitious as a Brahmin, as has already been remarked; a message was sent to Master Biddlecombe to get himself washed and combed; dinner had been “put back” for a quarter of an hour to give the absentee a chance, when a loud knocking at the door relieved the mind of the hostess, and threw her hopeful son and heir into a fit of hysterics.

“It only wants five minutes to the half hour,” said Sir John in an angry tone, giving a violent pull at the bell, thereby irritating the cook, and hindering the butler, who in pure spite put down the soup he was in the act of putting on the table, to come up stairs, and, with an unconscious air, inquire what was wanted.

Ravensworth made an attempt to approach Lady Atherley, but was intercepted by Lady

Biddlecombe, and before he had answered her numerous inquiries after his own health, and his good father Sir Francis Ravensworth,—our old acquaintance Mr. Pilcher the butler made his appearance, and communicated the agreeable intelligence that dinner was upon the table; a fact substantiated by the presumptive evidence of the olfactory nerves of the whole party. “Lord Atherley, take the Countess Oliviera. Ravensworth, pray take Lady Biddlecombe!” exclaimed Sir John, going forward and offering Lady Atherley his arm. Now as Ravensworth had studied mathematics sufficiently to know that two parallel lines cannot meet, he at once saw that, with Sir John at the top and my Lady at the bottom, all chance of any communication with Constance was at least, during the dinner, at an end. He had lived in hopes that some stray lordling might have been picked up, who would have saved him the duty of the post of honour, and never did he feel

more forcibly the truth of the aphorism “ that the post of honour is a private station.”

“ Sorry Lord Eustace could not dine here to-day,” said Lady Biddlecombe; “ we asked your old Westminster friend, Lord Cherbury, to meet you,—but both were engaged. How unlucky! Won’t you come up, Lord Atherley?” The noble Lord, thus called upon, took the second place of honour, as one of her Ladyship’s supporters. “ Only think, Lord Atherley, we were nearly sitting down *thirteen!*”

“ Dreadful, dreadful, my Lady; as the French *gourmand* said, when ridiculing this national superstition, ‘ What can be more horrible than to sit down thirteen, when there is only dinner for twelve!’ ”

We have already described one of Sir John and Lady Biddlecombe’s country dinners, and we will not inflict another “ order of the course ” upon our readers,—who, if the former description was not wholly drawn in vain, will easily conceive the increased splendour of the

London feast. Without our again entering into the minutiae, suffice it to say, that the dinner was “sent out” by a most fashionable pastry-cook of the day,—and was as good as 1*l.* 11*s.* 6*d.* per head (wine and dessert included) could make it: “remains of dinner to be returned to the pastry-cook.” His late Grace of Norfolk asserted “that a good dinner could not last too long, nor a bad one be too soon over;” on this principle five minutes would have been the limit of this feast. There was the usual miscellaneous conversation about the weather, the dog-days, the opera, the theatres, the last duel, the gaieties of the season, and other favourite topics of small talk, with the exclamatory eulogium upon the viands. Coffee was announced in the drawing-room ; the ladies obeyed Lady Biddlecombe’s signal for retiring, though they had remained long after several thundering knocks had announced that the plot up stairs was thickening.

“Ravensworth!” said Sir John, as he re-

sumed his chair after the departure of the ladies ; “ will you not come up ? we had better close in. Help yourself ; what wine do you drink, Priddie ? ” “ Claret ! ” was the reply of the latter,—said in a voice and accompanied with a look of surprise which seemed to imply “ of course.” “ Did you ever hear such a question ? ” he added in an under tone ; “ as if one drank port, that black poison—that hot intoxicating liquor so much drunk by the lower orders as Brummell calls it.”

Sir John now commenced his favourite topic. “ Have the royal dukes left England ? ” he asked, addressing the Rev. Mr. Posset, who made himself very useful to the family in London by acting as a sort of amanuensis, writing invitations, answering letters, regulating expenses, sitting at the bottom of Sir John’s table, and always pioneering to his host’s stories. “ Their Royal Highnesses the Duke de Berri and the Duke D’Angoulême did me the honour of a visit last Sunday. Unfortunately, we were

from home ;” and here, to use a sporting phrase, Sir John had a burst of five-and-twenty minutes without a check. However interesting these royal details might be to the host, his auditors would have shown less symptoms of impatience had he given the true version of the visit, and which we now lay before our readers :— Sir John had, for some months, been pestered by a joint-stock company of French Canadians to give his name and interest to as wild a scheme as ever emanated from the mind of man during the great bubble mania. Now Sir John having, in electioneering language, made his money “by the sweat of his brow,” had no idea of parting with it, or being caught with the “tub-thrown-to-a-whale” sort of bait of twenty-five per cent. and no risk. After sundry visits from the chairman *pro tem.*, and the honorary secretary, and the engineer, our worthy knight got so irate, that a general order was issued, forbidding the admission of any of the parties, their papers, or prospectuses. On the Sunday

previous to the dinner we have just alluded to, the Biddlecombes had accepted an invitation to pass the day at Harrow ; strict injunctions were left with the butler and footman not to be out of the way, as one of the strongest antipathies the ex-grocer of Ratborough had, was that his visitors should be answered by a female “ help.”

There is, unfortunately, much truth in the old adage, that “ when the cat’s away the mice will play.” Sunday was a beautiful day, and our friend Mr. Pilcher, having a friend at Hampstead, thought it a good opportunity of paying him a visit. Before leaving Nottingham-place House, he gave strict orders to the footman, Isaac, to remain at home. Until four o’clock this was duly attended to ; but at that hour a young woman (a cousin) happened to call in, and tempted the young man, with the college pudding head, to fetch a little walk in the Regent’s Park. One being only was now left to do the honours of the Biddlecombe mansion ; and therefore to her, Martha Rowles, we will

introduce our readers. She had been brought up in a noble family, but, having been discovered in some slight peculations, a mere tea-and-sugar petty larceny, was dismissed. Martha had, however, reformed, and for some years had filled the situation of head housemaid, and, during the family's absence from town, head housekeeper at Nottingham-place House. She would have made an excellent duenna ; she was lynx-eyed, quick-eared, vinegar-visaged, snap-pish, waspish, aspish ; having been watched herself, she thought it a peculiar right to watch others. The last words uttered to Mrs. Rowles were, to tell any visitors that the butler had only just stepped out, and, above all, not to admit the Frenchmen, nor any letters or papers they might wish to leave. Now, Martha had a very great national dislike to a Frenchman, almost amounting to the Nelsonian—a feeling, we are rejoiced to say, that no longer exists in the minds of our countrymen or women ; and it is “a consummation devoutly to be

wished," that the good feeling should be cherished by the French, as well as by the English,—and that all national prejudices could "die daily."

At a little after five o'clock, when Mrs. Rowles had just made up her mind to have a nice hot, comfortable cup of tea, and was toasting a muffin, all to herself, a loud thundering knock and a ringing of the bell were heard at the door. "I declare!" exclaimed the venerable lady, "one never can get one's meals in peace or comfort; the kettle's just a biling, cups and sarcers ready—well, I'm coming!" as she leisurely took off her apron, relinquished the toasting-fork, and proceeded to the door. Opening it, she perceived what she designated a "great to do" in the street—two state carriages, with panels emblazoned with arms flaming in Or and Gules, with two footmen in gorgeous liveries, attended each by a chasseur in green and gold, surrounded by a host of Sunday idlers.

"How is the Chevalier Biddlecombe?" inquired a good bluff-looking, Henry the VIII. sort of gentleman, inside. Martha's quick ears discovered by the accent that the parties were foreigners. Bristling up, and looking daggers, she uttered, "not at home; you're the same party as master positively forbid to enter the house — not at home — by no means!" But here our powers of description must yield to the graphic account of Mrs. Rowles herself, who, on the return of Sir John and Lady Biddlecombe was summoned to the drawing-room; and the following is a specimen of her sayings and doings:—

"Please Sir John, Mr. Pilcher had just stepped out to borrow Mr. Filcham's prayer-book, and Isaac the footman had gone round the corner to get our milk, when up drives two carriages, like my Lord Mayor's on the 9th of November: I knows what carriages should be, for when I lived with their Graces —"

"Never mind their Graces, proceed ;" interrupted Sir John.

"Well, as I was a saying, at a little before five up drives these two carriages, I makes myself tidy, and I goes to the door ; in the twinkling of an eye, I discovered that they were the identical Frenchmen that you had given strict orders never not to admit. Johnny Crapaud, says I, fine feathers make fine birds, but you shan't come over me with your tom taudry. Well, the gentleman inside says in broken English, How's Chuvaleer (that was the word,) Biddlecombe ?

"None the better for your asking ; and its no use you're trying to leave them cards here, — for master won't let any of you Frenchmen, or your works, come into his house." Here Sir John groaned. "Well, the foreign footmen, such *guys* to be sure, and a man dressed out like one of the gang as I seed at Ashley's, in Robin Hood, his face covered over with hair, began to parley-vous, and I believe to

swear at me in French. Oh, says I, a free-born Englishwoman an't to be scared away with you foreign frogs; so giving them a piece of my mind, I bangs the door in their faces."

Another groan from Sir John. " Looking through the hall-window, to see them safe off, I declare if I didn't see Count D'Aubigny in the second carriage,—he used often to call when I lived with their Graces ;—"

" Well," interrupted Sir John, impatiently ;
" well, go on."

" Well, Sir John, when I sees Count D'Aubigny, says I, Martha Rowles has made a mistake; so I opens the door, runs to the second carriage, and explains, that it warn't them Frenchmen as master had left orders should not be admitted; I then goes to the first carriage, drops a low curtsey, and says, I hope your Highnesses will *excuse* me, for spite of your fine h'equipages, I didn't know you; all is not gold that glitters." Sir John uttered an unintelligible growl as he

angrily dismissed the faithful Martha from his presence, muttering to herself:—“Here’s a pretty to-do about a parcel of French Mounseers; I wish they’d stay at home, and eat their frog-soup, and not disturb us during our meals.”

But to return to our narrative. The Soirée Musicale had been got up on the most reasonable scale imaginable. Lady Biddlecombe apologised for the absence of Madame Camporese, who, unfortunately, was labouring under a severe hoarseness, and for Signor Ambrogetti, who was unexpectedly called out of town. The real state of the case being, that her Ladyship’s terms were very much beneath the notice of the first class of vocalists. After a good deal of bustling and manœuvring the deficiencies were made up by the engagements of Signora Dupont, (anglicè Miss Bridge,) a young English lady, who went on in the chorusses at the English Opera House; Madame Bellan Shridgeoul, a superannuated pri-

ma donna ; Monsieur Shridgeoul, her husband, and apparently another superannuated prima donna. Mr. Hayd'n Stuckey, formerly music-master to Lady Biddlecombe ; Master Amati Geminiani Rebeck, (only eight years of age,) who played solos on the violin, Pandean pipes, and drum at the same time, the two latter by the ingenious device of having “the shepherds’ tuneful pipes” inserted in his cravat, and a huge drum-stick fastened upon his knee. The following programme, beautifully written out on blue satin paper, was distributed about the room.

PRIMA PARTE.

Overture—Lodoiska, Pianoforte. Mr. Hayd'n Stuckey.

Scena.—“Che faro senza Euridice ?”—GLUCK. Madame Bellan Shridgeoul, as sung by her with unbounded applause at La Scala, Milan, and San Carlo, Naples.

Duet.—“La ci darem la mano.”—MOZART. Monsieur et Madame Bellan Shridgeoul.

French ballad.—“Partant pour la Syrie.” Signora Fanny Dupont.

Pot Pourri.—Pianoforte, Mélange des dances, introducing the Bolero, Tyrolienne, Tarentella. Mr. Hayd'n Stuckey.

SECONDA PARTE.

Ballad.—“Auld Robin Gray.” Signora Fanny Dupont (accompanied by herself on the pianoforte).

Solo on the Violin.—Pandean Pipes and Drum. “Rebeck’s Reminiscences.” Master Amati Geminiani Rebeck.

Duet.—“Ebben per mia memoria.” Madame Bellan Shridgeoul and Signora Dupont.

Solo on the Pianoforte.—Mr. Hayd’n Stuckey, “Homage aux Rois,” introducing the national airs of God save the King, and Vive Henri Quatre ; arranged by Mr. Hayd’n Stuckey, and dedicated by permission to Sir John Biddlecombe.

SIGNOR MAESTRO COSTACARO,
CONDUCTOR.

Lady Biddlecombe frequently interrupted the progress of the songs and pieces, by ejaculating “brava ! beautiful ! charming ! brilliant ! oh, splendid !” Ravensworth was wedged in between the pianoforte and her Ladyship, and had not a single opportunity of addressing Constance. He was pressed by Lady Biddlecombe to join Lady Cheetham’s water party on the following day, and the inducement held out was the presence of the Atherleys. “ You

won't fail," said Lady Biddlecombe to Lord Atherley as he was about to retire.

"Depend upon us," replied the noble Lord. The above important event of the dinner and concert was duly "placed on the books" in that register office of fame, the "Morning Post."

On the following morning that immortal press devoted itself to the description of Lady Biddlecombe's concert. The names of the distinguished guests, present and absent, (for her Ladyship's amanuensis had sent a list of all she had invited,) the dresses, the apartments, the decorations, the viands, and every minute arrangement, were detailed with the greatest accuracy and ostentatious minuteness; forming a catalogue *raisonnée* of all that was seen, done, or said, in the Nottingham-place House drawing-rooms.

We spare our readers a detailed panegyric and merely give a list of the company.

COUNTESSES—Oliviera, Caballero, Szezepanyowsky, and Atherley.

DOWAGER VISCOUNTESSES—Braemer, and Ellaby.

LADIES—Yellowlees, Woller, Wigglesworth, Wabbleby, Fitz-Garratt, M'Swinnie.

MESDAMES—Whiskin, Tylee, Catlow, Smithe, Hones, Jones, Bones.

MISSES—Whiskin, Tylee, Catlow, 3 Smithes, 2 Hones, 3 Bones, 4 Jones.

Earl of Atherley.

Count Szezepanyowsky.

Barons Vredenburg, Van Fowinwinkle.

Hon. Augustus Priddie.

SIRS—Wyndham Yellowlees, Timothy Hauxwell, Bazzett Clutton, Dugald M'Swenie.

Rev. J. Possett.

Dudley Ravensworth, Esq., M.P.

MESSIEURS—Whiskin, Bibury, Tylee, Daymann, Trivett, Bastick, Choppin.

CHAPTER XI.

WATER PARTY.

“ Numberless barks manned with revellers in their best garbs shot along the glancing tide.”

Guide to Richmond.

“ The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burned on the water.”

Antony and Cleopatra.

LONDON was growing hot, so everybody began to say, though during the heat of the dog-days they had been too busy to make the remark or notice the fact ; that delightful period the end of July had arrived, that period which has been aptly likened to a game of *écarté* after a rubber of long whist. All were flocking away,—some to their own,

others to country houses of their friends ; some to Spa, Baden Baden, Brighton, Ramsgate, and Cheltenham. No longer the roll of the frequent chariot, or the loud thunder of the footman's knock, was heard. The unswept straw at the mansion door showed that the waggons had been packed and had gone, and already were the pier glasses, the chandeliers, and curtains entombed in canvass ; the golden saloons of the clubs were shut up, and the servants lounged at the untrodden entrances. How different was the aspect of Bond-street ; the customless tradesman had retired to that *beau ideal* of a cockney's seaward paradise, Margate ! The basin in the Green Park,—the favourite resort of nursery maids and children, — was deserted. A few officials chained to the purlieus of Parliament, some half-dozen fashionable stragglers, and a group of idle guardsmen loitering by the steps of their club,—were all that remained of the by-gone season.

Lady Cheetham and Mrs. Barnsley Scru-
ton's water party, which we alluded to in our
last chapter, was however to take place. Un-
fortunately, in the days of which we write,
Murphy's Almanack was not in existence; the
weather therefore could not be sold for the
year, in lots for daily use, at eighteen-pence the
packet. The morning arrived,—the party had
assembled at Lady Cheetham's house in York
Place; the carriages were at the door; sundry
hampers were in the hall, filled with cold fowls
and ham, beef, mutton, veal, and lamb, salads,
patés de foie gras, linen, cutlery, crockery, bot-
tles of wine, “from humble Port to imperial
Tokay,” porter, ale, and cider; when lo! a
distant rumbling was heard. “What on earth
is *that?*” exclaimed Lady Cheetham; “surely
that can't be thunder?”

“Oh no! impossible,—see how the clouds
are breaking,” responded Mrs. Barnsley Scru-
ton; “it's only Lady Dillingham's family

coach." At that moment a few drops began to fall ; "merely heat drops." "How very unlucky!" exclaimed a dozen voices.

"Very!" was the languid reply of a young dandy, as he threw himself into a chair.

"One consolation there is, it cannot last ; this must be a clearing shower," said Lady Cheetham, as a deluge of rain came down in all its fulness.

The younger part of the party, blessed and buoyant with hope, felt assured, like Farmer Ashfield, "that it never rains, but it's a sure sign it's going to give over;" and therefore proclaimed that it would clear at one o'clock ; others prognosticated that the rain had set in for the day.

The unhappy party went to the window, and occupied themselves by looking out for a bit of blue sky, which was to give earnest of a general clearing up. The clouds were, however, unrelenting, and for some time the pitiless storm continued

without any seeming chance of abatement. It appeared that the assembly need not go to the water: the water had come to them. At length the darkness of the sky decorated itself with a streak of light, like a bit of blue ribbon; the sun attempted to peep out; — all was life at once: and, the carriages coming round, the party proceeded to White-hall Stairs. A steam-boat was in readiness.

“ Ah, these are days of invention,” said Sir Marmaduke Screwton. “ I remember the time when the *agrémens* of a water party consisted in sitting in a condensed state, like a trussed fowl, with a round iron rail as a support to your back, — when you were deluged with a cold shower-bath, — when you got your feet wet, and your stockings covered with black slimy mud, in getting into the boat, — when you were obliged to laugh at the commonplace joke, ‘ That your coat was on fire;’ but on recovering the tails of your coat, you found that there was

luckily plenty of water. Now our *esteamed* friend takes us cozily and swiftly, enabling us to defy wind and weather."

But we must devote a few words to the patron and patroness of the day. Lady Cheetham was a dowager of great pretensions and small fortune; she lived upon the public, and as a promoter of water parties and pic-nics, she managed to get herself and a host of toadies, male and female, introduced as invited guests. By recommending her rich and aristocratic friends to patronise certain libraries, she had the command of opera and play-boxes during the dull season; on the Tuesdays before Easter, the Epsom and Ascot week, and the expiring nights of August, Lady Screwton's name was ostentatiously paraded on the door of a box. By giving her name, and that of her friends, as patronesses of charitable balls and concerts, she received bonusses in the shape of tickets, and she presided over pincushions

and fancy fairs, and did much inexpensive fashionable charity.

Sir Marmaduke Screwton, M.P., brother-in-law to Mrs. Barnsley Screwton, was her Ladyship's worthy coadjutor. There certainly must be a great charm or a hidden recompence in being an M.P., or men would never condescend to drudge, cajole, flatter, and fawn,—to stoop to all ranks, to humour “the greasy rogues,” to gain that point. But to our senator: he was a vulgar being who mistook impudence for ease,—familiarity for good breeding, and had no *other* peculiarity to distinguish him. Mrs. Barnsley Screwton was a blooming young widow, anxious “to renew !”

In about half an hour the passengers were safely stowed on board the Endeavour, and boiled away, at the convulsive rate of ten knots an hour, towards the Eel-pie House at Twickenham. Dudley had unfortunately been detained in the House of Commons, and only

reached Whitehall Stairs in time to hear that the Endeavour had started some ten minutes. Whilst hesitating what to do, a jolly young waterman, who, *like Dibdin's*, “was thinking of nothing at all,” approached Ravensworth, and said, “I see a smoker a-coming, she a’n’t a regular plyer; but step into my wherry, I’ll hail her, and mayhap she may give you a passage.” At this moment Priddie drove up.

“Just in time to be too late, I fear,” said the exquisite.

Dudley turned away disgusted at the prospect of his society; but Priddie would not take a hint, and entered into the proposed arrangements for joining the party.

In about a quarter of an hour the steam-boat neared the stairs; it was most gaudily decorated with flags and banners, and laurel and artificial roses, and pink and white calico awnings. Ravensworth hailed the captain, who, after some little consultation with the

passengers, agreed to take him and his friend to the Eel-pie House. Dudley got on board, accompanied by Priddie, and was about to congratulate himself upon his good fortune, when he was addressed by a pert, little, flip-pant, vulgar man, with a red face and a white wand.

“ Beg pardon, sir, who have I the pleasure of addressing ? ”

“ Mr. Ravensworth,” replied Dudley.

“ Mr. Ravensworth, M.P., I presume ? I have the honour to be honorary secretary to the Cow-cross and West Smithfield Equitable Loan Society, and Anti-fraud Association. Josias Sims, sir, at your service ; shall be proud to present you to the members, please to step this way.”

Dudley mechanically followed the worthy secretary, and descending a few steps entered the cabin ; loud voices burst upon his ears.

“ Silence, ladies and gentlemen ! ” cried Mr. secretary Sims in a stentorian voice ; “ I have

the very great gratification in presenting to you Mr. Ravensworth, M.P., who has kindly honoured us with his presence on this auspicious occasion.”

“Room for Mr. Ravensworth!” shouted a dozen voices, and Dudley found himself forced into a seat ; supported on the right by a fat, flaunting, painted, vulgar loan woman, Sims’s better half, as he called her, when presenting her to the refined M.P. ; and on the left by a tall gaunt damsel, who gloried in the name of Buffy, Miss Adeliza Euphemia Buffy.

Priddie, who had now joined Dudley, declared she must be a relation of a then truly popular comic actor, inasmuch as he had never seen a face so full of humour. To describe the luxuries that the tables of the Cow-cross and West Smithfield Equitable Loan Society groaned under, would be impossible : suffice it to say, slices of cold raw beef, sickly-looking veal, coarse streaky ham, pork pies, Bologna sausages, saveloys, salad, radishes, onions, water-

cresses, single and double Gloucester, cold plum-puddings, stale fruit tarts, caraway-seed biscuits, Bath buns, “decked the board.” Bottled stout, ale and cider, spruce-beer, ginger-beer, soda-water, every liquor, from “*humble port-er*” to imperial pop, was ready for the corkscrew. A band, consisting of one fiddle, a clarionet, and a harp, played occasional airs throughout the repast; the Equitable dinner being ended, the ladies, headed by Mrs. Sims and the demoiselles Buffy and Sparling, retired upon deck. Mr. Ravensworth’s health was proposed by the chairman, with an obligato flourish about the respectability of the Capelocracy, as the erudite secretary denominated the *Shopocracy* of Cow-cross and West Smithfield.

Shortly afterwards the gentlemen received a summons to join the ladies. A country-dance was called for, and Priddie opened the ball with Miss Matilda Julia Sparling, first cousin to the before-mentioned Adeliza; a

young lady with brief petticoats and unexceptionable ankles, dressed in a geranium-coloured muslin dress, white straw bonnet trimmed with red ribbons, a splendid assortment of rings, a huge gold watch and chain, and open-worked stockings. Dudley had been previously presented to her aunt Mrs. Buffy, a woman of most surprising corporeal dimensions, with the reddest possible face and the crossest possible look.

“ I beg, Mr. P. that you will take special care of my niece Tilda, for there is sitch a mixture of company, and Miss S. is very partiklar.”

“ My Tilda,” as Mrs. Buffy called her niece, “ and her cousin Addy,” had been educated at Miss Stiffkey Pudnams’ seminary, the Grove, Paragon, Clapham Rise; where, among other accomplishments, they had studied a language well known at all such seminaries for the diffusion of knowledge, called *gibberish*: by this known unknown tongue young ladies are

enabled to carry on conversations before their mothers, chaperons, or instructresses. To the seeker of knowledge it may be as well to add, that the simple process of making the language, is by repeating every syllable, and placing a *g* before the vowel in its repetition ; *e.g.*—as the grammars say—‘ How, howgow, you, yougou, and, andgand, it, itgit.’ As the cousins, attended by their chaperon, paced the deck, the following inquiry was made by Miss Addy, “Aga, handgandsomegome mangan isgis Misgisterger Ragavensgenseworthgorth.” “Vegerygy, isgis hege margarriedgied ?” “Ohgo, nogo,” replied Tilda, “andgand richgich asgas Croe-goesusgus.” For the benefit of country gentlemen we translate the above : “A handsome man is Mr. Ravensworth.” “Very ; is he married ?” “Oh, no ; and rich as Crœsus !” This colloquy was put an end to by the band striking up “Drops of brandy,” in what might be called a *spirited* manner, and which proved that the musicians had imbibed no small quan-

tity of the name of the air they were playing. At the expiration of three hours the “Favourite” (as the steamer was called) shot Richmond bridge, passed the Twickenham meadows, and neared the far famed Eel-pie island.

“Ladies and gentlemen, silence!” ejaculated Mr. Secretary Sims: “I have the pleasure to inform you, that after paying all expenses, I find I have a balance of five pounds, fourteen shillings and threepence halfpenny, in hand.”

“Hear! hear!” cried the party.

“I propose,” continued the popular chancellor of the exchequer, “that we should land at the island, and devote that sum to a tea-party for the ladies.”

“Hear him! hear him!” shouted a dozen voices from the coterie assembled; “three cheers for Sims, and the Cow-cross and West Smithfield Equitable Loan Society! one cheer more!” As the last cheer began, the “Favourite” took up her moorings off the island, and Dudley, to his horror, saw his own party just sitting

down to dinner. Mr. Sims, attended by Mr. Kilwarden of St. Mary's Hill, or, as he was called, Mr. Kevarden of Simmery Hill, treasurer to the society, landed, accompanied by Mrs. Sparling and Buffy (who felt themselves rayther squeamish) and Dudley Ravensworth. The band played " Fly not yet," in honour of the departing guests, and a shout of " hip, hip, hurrah!" attracted the attention of the Cheetaham pic-nic.

" Ravensworth and Priddie, I declare!" echoed a dozen voices; " but who on earth has he got with him? who can it be? How extraordinary! Well, I never!" and other ejaculations of surprise issued from many of the party. Messrs. Sims and Kilwarden, having deposited the *Cyclades* from the Ægean deep, as Priddie called them, in the bar, proceeded to make arrangements for *hot-watering*, *sugaring*, *milking*, and *shrimping* the Cow-cross and West Smithfield Equitable Loan Society, at the small charge of sixpence per head.

Dudley, taking leave of his friends, joined his first formed party, but was unable to get near the object of his wishes. Lady Atherley had been seized upon by Priddie, and Dudley found himself located between Mrs. Barnsley Scruettion, who obligingly made room for him, and a young exquisite of the Guards, who with his pouncet-box, &c. reminded you of Hotspur's fop; the one little object of self was the object of his worship through every hour of the day. In the mean time the *freight* of the “Favourite” had landed.

Tea over, Mr. Kilwarden rose to propose that there should be a whip among the gentlemen for punch and the weed. This proposition was carried unanimously, and in less than five minutes pipes and large bowls of arrack punch were produced. The band were ordered to “play up,” and a country-dance, to the aristocratic air of “Merrily danced the Quaker’s wife,” was commenced. Reader, picture to yourself the horror and consternation of Lady Cheetham

and Mrs. Barnsley Screwton ! Waiters running to and fro with glasses of rum and water, “ hot with,”—bottles of ale, bottles of stout, ginger-beer bottles going off, practical jokes going on. Nor did the nature of the conversation, interlarded as it was with oaths and coarse sayings, speak much for the quality of the company. In vain did Lady Cheetham send the waiter to request the party would not mar her fêté:—shouts of laughter, uproarious mirth, bacchanalian songs, attended this remonstrance ; a temporary calm gave her hopes.

“ Would Lady Atherley kindly favour us with a song ; it may, like Orpheus of old, ‘ soothe the savage brutes.’ ” Lady Atherley was about to reply, when a growled a-hem from Lord Atherley, which in language matrimonial means “ hold your tongue ! ” decided the question.

“ Silence for Miss Buffy’s song ! ” shouted the president of the Loan Society ; and after sundry excuses of cold and hoarseness, Miss Buffy

warbled forth “ My art with love is beaten.” Dudley, disgusted at the disasters of the day, had just proposed a ramble to Lady Atherley ; and was congratulating himself that he should escape the noise and confusion of the island, when he heard his name loudly called. On turning round, he beheld two individuals almost breathless with haste ; the first gained upon him, and he recognised him as the stoker of the *Favourite*,—his *steam* was evidently up. “ Stop *her* ! ” he exclaimed, meaning “ stop him,” fancying himself still on board his craft. “ Sir, sir, Mr. Ravensworth ! Mr. Buffy insists upon your stopping ; he wants Miss Buffy’s ridikule.” At that moment Buffy himself, accompanied by Mr. Sparling, appeared, both evidently under the influence of the jolly god,—that is, if Bacchus presides over such vulgar beverages as are called upon to exhilarate loan societies !

“ Damn it, sir ! ” cried the infuriated puppy ; “ what, scudding away ?—heave to ! ”

Our readers must be informed that Dick Buffy was a junior clerk in one of the city wharfs, and was part proprietor, with his friend Jack Sparling and others, of the Water Wagtail cutter, a yacht of ten tons. Dick fancied himself a regular seaman, and dressed out after the fashion of the gentleman that dances the naval hornpipe at the minors,—that is, in checked shirt, glazed hat, striped stockings, blue jacket with anchor buttons, white trowsers, black neck-cloth, and boatswain's whistle. He always interlarded his conversation with nautical phrases,

“ —— of caulking
And quarter-deck walking
Fore and aft
And abaft
Hookers, barkeys, and craft,
Of binnacles, bilboes, the boom called the spanker,
The best bower cable, the jib and sheet anchor,
Of lower deck guns, and of broadsides and chases,
Of taffrails and top-sails and splicing main braces.”

“ None of your piratical tricks, you lubber of a land shark,” said Dick Buffy, staggering; “ heave to, or I'll fire a shot into you.”

"Sarve him out, Dick," hiccupped Jack Sparling.

"Out of the way, sir!" said Dudley firmly.
"You're drunk."

"Drunk, am I?" replied Mr. Sparling with drunken solemnity. "I'm sober as, as a—a judge, who dares deny it is a—a—a—that's what I say." Ravensworth kept his temper.

Lady Atherley frightened at the *rencontre* drew back, and remained a passive witness of the scene.

"What is it you want, gentlemen?" asked Dudley, with as much calmness as he could command.

"Stow your gab," replied the ireful Buffy. "I'll let you know what I want, you son of a sea-gun; when you took my sister in tow, you laid your grappling irons on part of her cargo. I've been cruising on the look-out for the last half hour; and now I've caught a glimpse of the proper signal, damme but every timber shall start before I give up the chase!"

"Sir," said Ravensworth, "your anger makes you forget yourself."

"Very heroic, pon honor," replied Sparling; "but whether intended for tragedy or comedy, fleece me if I can guess."

The mystery was now dissolved; Ravensworth remembered that when Priddie had led Miss Euphemia Adeliza Buffy forward to the dance, that she had entrusted him with her reticule; a salmon-coloured bag trimmed with blue ribbons, and ornamented with bead-work, and in which "*locker*" Miss Buffy had had the providence to "*stow away*," as her brother would have called it, certain sweet articles, in the shapes of figs, raisins, Norfolk biffins, Bath-buns, oranges and gingerbread. Dudley began to apologise, and, producing the "*reticule*," expressed his regret that an accident had occurred to it. This was evident from the stains that appeared. Buffy, on opening the "*sac*," found a jam of the articles we have before mentioned. This infuriated him to such

a degree, that he was about to break the peace, when he was held by Jack Sparling. Jack was a lawyer's clerk, and knew that assaults and batteries were formidable affairs.

"Take the law of him, Dick. Don't demean yourself by striking him. You a gentleman!" addressing Ravensworth. "You're a—you're everything that's not actionable," said the prudent limb of the law.

"Law be d—d!" replied Dick. "He deserves tarring and feathering,—a round dozen at the grating;—but here's my card." Buffy presented his card; it ran as follows:—

MR. BUFFY, JUN.

NO. 10, PIG'S WHARF,

BLACKFRIARS.

"Really, sir," replied Ravensworth, "I am very much shocked. Permit me to replace the 'sac' to-morrow. I shall have much pleasure in forwarding one to—"

At this moment a shout from the Favourite announced that she was getting “under weigh.”

“Well,” said Sparling, “come along, Dick.” Then, turning to Dudley, said, “If you are a gentleman, act as sitch ; if not, we’ll commence proceedings for the damage done, unless the debt is paid, together with five shillings for this application.”

The pair reeled off together. Ravensworth, to his annoyance, found that a messenger from Lord Atherley had recalled Lady Atherley. The following day, the house of Dyde and Scribe, now Harding and Howell, Pall Mall, were considerably shocked at having to send a most beautiful “sac,” embroidered in gold, to the following plebeian address ;—“Miss E. A. BUFFON, (they had the good taste to alter the name,) No. 52, Gough Square, Farringdon Without.”

We return to the Cheetham party, who, after considerable discussion, had agreed to adjourn to Vauxhall. All the carriages, cars,

vans, chaises, &c. that could be mustered in Twickenham were retained to convey them to the “Royal Gardens;” the bill was called for ; one of Lady Cheetham’s pet tigers proposed that the gentleman should pay for the ladies.

“Hear him, hear him !” cried a respectable elderly gentleman, who had four unmarried wall-flowers of daughters.

“Including the steam-boat, band, Tyrolean singers, and the carriages to Vauxhall—”

“Conductors included,” said Lady Cheetham, “only three pounds, fifteen shillings, per head ; how very cheap ! Landlord,” continued the lady, who had always an eye to the main chance, “you could not just order your gardener to make up a small bouquet of flowers.”

“Certainly, my lady.”

“And don’t forget that splendid trout ; it will be quite a curiosity in London.”

“Thank you, my lady.”

“I think, next week, we shall pay you

another visit ;”—the only thing, on such occasions, her ladyship ever did pay. The obsequious landlord bowed, made up what was required, and charged at the head of his forces.

The party entered Vauxhall Gardens at a little after ten, just in time to hear a lady, dressed in sky-blue satin, swan’s-down tippet, cream-coloured hat and feathers, sing a duet with a white waistcoat and falsetto voice, in which the former imitated the cries of a young infant, and entered into all the mysteries of the nursery, and the latter delighted his hearers with “his famous farm-yard imitations.”

Lady Cheetham expatiated upon the beauties of the gardens, the variegated lamps, the well-kept gravel walks, the Moorish band, the military band, the cosmorama, the dark walks, and the hermitage. After walking round and round the gardens, like horses in a mill, only with infinitely less purpose,—paired, not matched; for, in the rush to get seats at Twicken-

ham the most extraordinary couples found themselves together ; a bell announced the fireworks. Then came the rush, then the phiz ; rockets went up, sticks came down, amidst the ohs ! and ahs ! and oh laws ! and oh dears ! of the ladies. Mrs. Barnsley Screwton was frightened to a degree. Lady Cheetham declared it terrific. Blue lights, yellow lights, red lights blazed forth, and discovered an interesting-looking young lady, the fair Nourmahal, as the bills called her, with a blue turban, pink tunic, white spangled trowsers, yellow boots, who, with a pole, painted like a barber's, in her hand, was standing upon one leg on a tight rope, extremely well lit up. After sundry evolutions of twisting and twirling, the aforesaid damsels disappeared in an explosion of fireworks by the celebrated pyrotechnic artist, Signor Giovanni Flaruppi Vesuvio.

It was now time for “the fashion” to retire : unfortunately, in those days there was no

Mr. Simpson (the Vauxhall Beau Nash of our time) to welcome one to the royal property, or conduct one from it, with proper respect; a link-boy was therefore deputed to order Lady Cheetham's carriages. “Lady Cheetham's carriage! Lady Cheetham's servants!” was shouted by all the links at the door “in *linked* sweetness long drawn out.” At this moment a few heavy drops of rain fell, and the denseness of the atmosphere threatened a thunderstorm: there was a general rush for the few coaches on the stand. The link-boy returned, assuring her ladyship “that there warn't niver sich a thing as a coach or a sарvint.”

Huddled together under a temporary awning,—the rain cullendering its way through it,—the Cheetham party remained till near two o'clock, when a sufficient number of hackney-coaches were enlisted. Of course, the Twickenham coachmen, having (by Lady Cheetham's forethought) been paid in ad-

vance, and not fancying a waiting job, had, after unloading, returned peaceably home. On reaching Lady Cheetham's domicile in York Place, that lady apologised to the party that the lateness of the hour prevented her asking them in to tea ; and, after begging the gentlemen would be kind enough to pay the charge, and inform her of it on some future occasion, retired to her downy pillow.

Dudley had left the party just before the confusion at the gardens. To him the fête had been indeed weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable. Water parties have more than the usual allowance of that insipidity which is inseparable from the simple element.

CHAPTER XII.

CHRISTMAS AT COMPTON AUDLEY.

“ And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all its hospitable train.

Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night ;
On Christmas eve the bells were rung ;
On Christmas eve the mass was sung.

“ Then opened wide the baron’s hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all ;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And Ceremony doffed her pride.

“ England was merry England when,
Old Christmas brought his sports again ;
’Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale,
’Twas Christmas told the merriest tale ;
A Christmas gambol oft would cheer
The poor man’s heart through half the year.”

WALTER SCOTT’S *Marmion*.

IN almost every age and nation of the world
mankind have had the strongest attachment

to ancient and long-established habits and customs, and in no country has there been a more bigotted devotion to them than in the good old times of “merrie England.” Merrie England no more! Busy, mercantile England! Modern refinement and innumerable innovations, led on by the universal spirit for gain, have drawn down upon us the trite remark, that we are “a nation of shopkeepers.” This calculating spirit has interfered with the amusements of the humbler classes; and, while we rejoice at the decline of many of the rude usages and brutal amusements of former days, we cannot but regret that the wakes, the Whitsun ales, the morris-dancing, pageants, mumming, the humours and frolic, the social and exhilarating meetings of sheep-shearing, harvest-home, May-day games, and Christmas revels,—which imparted such a charm to rural life,—are falling into disuse. Let, then, the amusements of the humbler orders be left alone, or worse will follow: man must be

employed. If you curtail the sports which have been for ages past the enjoyment of our peasants and manufacturers, secret societies and debating clubs will spring up; the people will be told that they are slaves, oppressed by the rich,—and then ensues a general rising of the disaffected; thence follow anarchy, discord, bloodshed, and ruin.

But to change our scene. Nothing can be more conducive to goodwill and fellowship between landlord and tenant, masters, labourers, and servants, than the festivities and mirth of these periodical feasts. The full meal of good and substantial food, the copious draughts of strong and generous liquor, animate the blood, open the heart, and expand the genial feelings; misconceptions and errors are acknowledged, lurking grudges and animosities die away: the rich and privileged classes, by living amongst their manly and high-minded peasantry, by mingling frankly with their less favoured brethren, gain their confidence, be-

come their friends, leaders, counsellors, protectors. In times of difficulty and hardship they alleviate their distress, diffuse among them those benefits which may be important to their welfare, and obtain that legitimate influence which makes them objects of respect and admiration, and secures around them an almost feudal homage. Now, although our noble Lord Atherley was not influenced by any of these honest feelings, he thought it not only agreeable but expedient to devote a certain portion of his time to his estate in the country. Passing over the few months therefore that he had devoted to Brighton since his departure from London, we bring him to Compton Audley, whither a large party had been invited, and, among the rest, Dudley Ravensworth. Strange it is, yet not more strange than true, that an absence of some months had removed the weight of jealousy from Lord Atherley's mind : he quite realised

the remarks of a popular French novelist of our day :

“ Pour tout ce qui regarde leur repos conjugal, les maris sont clairvoyans comme les aveugles : ils voient avec la main, et lorsque par hasard une vague inquiétude rôde autour d’eux, et leur fait pressentir le danger qui les ménace, ils repoussent avec orgueil ces pressentiments salutaires ; ils affectent une héroïque confidence, ils accueillent le danger au lieu de chercher à le prévenir, ils font parade de la sécurité qu’ils n’ont pas.”

Christmas,—like the oyster-shell grotto—“ comes but once a year,” and John Bull arrives at an annual determination to throw aside his surliness and dignity, and to enjoy himself. The higher classes, now in communication with their poorer brethren, are made cognisant of the deprivations and hardships to which the latter are exposed at this inclement season ; and their charity is inspired to flow

with profusion and liberality. The man of business leaves his troubles and his cares about stock, scrip, and produce, and becomes a frolicsome *bull* or a gleesomeable *bear* on Mirth's 'Change. The blessing brought by the season to the Christian world renders it a time sacred to generous rejoicing, to universal happiness; though, alas! the good old customs of our ancestors have experienced a greater decay than the venerable seats of feudal grandeur which those ancestors inhabited. Christmas is just the tide when people sigh their souls towards the country. It is the interval between the appointed end of all things and their commencement. Even now, the most thorough-paced town gentleman, the brick-environed Londoner, pants for change of air; and prefers the merry-makings under the mistletoebough,— the romping and the dances of the country—to the dirty and disconsolate-looking streets, flooded with muddy water, and slippery with half-melted ice and snow.

All the world is indeed happy: the crackling faggot blazes upon the hearth, the glow of the fire-side seems to ripen the heart into kindly feelings; the nipping frost *without* makes our roaring fires and warmest sympathies burn brighter *within*, and, in spite of inclement weather, hospitality is more keenly and uninterruptedlly enjoyed than ever. The skies, when bright, are without a single cloud; the trees are embossed with rime; and the heavy icicles are pendent, and glitter as if formed of solid silver.

Compton Audley was a handsome modern mansion, of a noble appearance without, and enormously comfortable within. It was at once vast, commodious, and elegant; perfect in all the appointments a luxurious age can furnish. It stood on the south side of a hill, sheltered from the north by a fine old wood. The park, though not very extensive, was strikingly beautiful, from the inequality of the ground, which was richly clustered with the

most picturesque oaks and stately beeches, and traversed by the swift and sparkling stream—

“That to the brooding trees all night
Singeth a quiet tune.”

There were long avenues of elm and horse-chesnut, forming a vista from the lodge to the house. The grounds were laid out in good taste, and kept up with extreme care. Terraces and fountains were interspersed with groves of cypress and cedar trees. Winding paths, cut through the flowery grass, were overshadowed by laurels, acacias, and choice shrubs. The garden immediately under the windows of the library was a perfect paradise, containing a profusion of the rarest flowers, and partaking more of the Italian than the English style. In the midst of a large parterre a magnificent *jet d'eau* threw its waters into the light. There were marble balustrades, classical urns, statues — contributing a chaste radiance that harmonised with nature. A low

flight of steps led down to a green mossy terrace, which extended all along the front of the house. Some fine old sycamores skirted the edge of a broad walk, and lent their mighty branches in rich masses of dark foliage, throwing a sweep of shadow upon the river beneath. At the extremity of this shaded walk a rustic building, formed of the trunks and boughs of aged trees with the bark on, had been fitted up for Constance, and was filled with birds, stands of flowers, and books. The sides and windows were “o'er-canopied with luscious woodbine.” Lord Atherley had built, to the admiration of the whole country, a princely set of hunting-stables; and Compton Audley possessed the superlative English merit of being situated within the reach of four packs of fox-hounds. Need we add, that the offices, gardens, green-houses, hot-houses, pineries, the extensive fruit-walls, were perfect; and that among the innumerable *agrémens*—though last, not least--Lord Atherley's *chef de cuisine* was

a “*cordon bleu* ;” so great an artist, that, had the cynic who stigmatised our nation as one “avec vingt religions et qu'une sauce” enjoyed one of Monsieur le Garlique’s dinners, he would have withdrawn the latter part of this unmerited sarcasm.

It was a bright November day when the Atherleys made their entrance into Compton Audley, for the Earl loved display. The morning arrived; all the avenues were lined with expecting gazers, and the collected groups were beguiling the time with various sports and frolics. At length the sound of rustic music, and the buzz of an approaching multitude which had collected from the adjacent villages, proclaimed beyond all doubt the arrival of the party at Compton Audley. In an instant the park rung with loud shouts; and two carriages, with outriders, drew up at the lodge gate. Lord Atherley was all smiles; the horses were taken from his carriage — a little scheme concocted by him and his steward,

and which made a flaming paragraph in the county papers. The Atherleys were, to use the newspaper phraseology, “drawn in triumph to their home by a happy and grateful tenantry !”

During the day there was a constant arrival of visitors, and at dinner at least thirty guests were assembled together. The party consisted of a strange *mélange*—sinecure patriots and M.P.’s, seeking amusement during the recess ; men of fashion, indulging in change of scene ; mammas, hunting marrying men ; young ladies, *backing* their pointing parents ; with the usual proportion of cub lords, dandies, and twaddlers.

There is a venerable axiom, “ that, to view our social life aright in its true national character, you must be permitted to see and mingle with the circle of a country mansion well filled ; ” and it unquestionably is true, that, only in a country house, or in the midst of his park, his farms, his woods and plantations, an Eng-

lishman breaks from his habits of reserve and gives vent to his natural feelings. The cold formalities and civilities of a London life are set aside ; the invigorating sports of the country bring men together in good humour and harmony :—what a contrast to the heat, dust, noise, political contentions, ostentatious rivalry, dissipation, the turning night into day of the modern Babel ! In the true spirit of hospitality all constraint is removed, kindred spirits are assembled ; breakfast waits for nobody, and nobody waits for breakfast ; each takes his meal alone, or in coteries of his own forming. At luncheon a general “gathering” takes place, when parties or *tête-à-têtes* are made for walking, driving, or riding (*en passant* be it said, Compton Audley was in a beautiful county for excursions) ; each partakes of the recreations according to his own inclination,—the sports of the field, the gentle craft, books, music, and all the elegancies of social life. It is the perfection of human enjoyment.

Dudley delighted in Compton Audley ; independent of the attraction of the exquisite paintings, the splendid objects of *virtù* afforded him a mental recreation which for the moment absorbed all other feelings. The rules of proportion and the orders of art may be acquired by study ; but that just discernment of the beautiful, which is denominated taste, is a gift of nature, and this Ravensworth possessed to an eminent degree. He would have enjoyed it more, but unfortunately he found in one of the guests, Mr. Broadlands, an agriculturist ; in another, Sir Mark Buller, a determined sportsman : both were anxious to secure his interest for the corn and game laws, and therefore tried to inoculate him with their views, or rather *view-halloos*. Every morning soon after day-break the stentorian voice of Sir Mark was heard in Ravensworth's room ; and the figure of the worthy Baronet, equipped for shooting, startled him as he awoke from a dream of Constance. Had he been left alone,—had he been

left to amuse himself,—he would have been contented; but to devote himself to stubble-fields and ploughed lands from ten till four o'clock was too energetic a pleasure: on his return home, fatigued, he would have ensconced himself in the library easy-chair, but Mr. Broadlands would insist upon taking him to the farm, to see a new thrashing-machine, or some new-fangled plough. Nor was all this the work of a day; for Dudley never rested his weary head on the pillow, without being conscious that he must

“To-morrow to fresh fields and pastimes new.”

The remaining guests went through the usual routine of country-house life, as the actors say, “letter perfect.” The gentlemen visited the paddocks, the farm, and the dairy; poked into the piggeries and the out-houses; surveyed the flower and kitchen gardens, with their conservatories, orangeries, forcing-houses, mushroom establishment, and hot-beds; inspected the sta-

bles, admired the hunters, hacks, and coach-horses ; and were seen crawling about from spot to spot like wasps at the end of a wet summer. The ladies strolled in the flower-garden, copied music, tried over the latest waltzes, learned new patterns, turned over portfolios of autographs and caricatures,—and did their little idleings with a patience perfectly exemplary. They enjoyed that perfection of female enjoyment—“ having nothing to do, and plenty of time to do it in.”

Christmas arrived, and with it all its festivities. “ What can be more dreadful than your merry Christmas,” exclaimed Priddie, who formed one of the party, “ with its snow and frost ? Does it not put an end to hunting, and brings it not with it the positive fear of opening a letter, and finding it ‘ an annual ’ from your boot-maker, *schneider*, hatter, &c. requesting attention to your small account, — the firm having dissolved, and the affairs of the late concern being in the hands of solicitors ? ”

"But surely," replied the Honourable Miss Mangeon, a spinster who preferred to "reign" in the country than to "serve" in the metropolis, "Christmas is a glorious time."

"Protect me," replied Priddie, "from your 'glorious days ;' Christmas day, New Year's day, Twelfth day, with all their charming accompaniments of splendid sirloins, the enormous bliss of plum-puddings, the delicious mince-pies, frosted cakes, county balls, and that climax of vulgar motion — an English country-dance ! "

Olden hospitality and profusion were liberally displayed at Compton Audley. After a long series of boisterous days the weather suddenly cleared, and New Year's day put on its holiday garb; it was the anniversary of Lord Atherley's birthday, an event that was always kept with boisterous mirth.

All the county were on the *qui vive*. In the park oxen were roasted whole and distributed among the populace; barrels of "October,"

brewed at Lord Atherley's marriage, flowed in all directions ; and the food of our hardy sires smoked on the festive board. The tenants and their families partook of a plenteous repast ; all was a scene of joy and festivity. Equal gaiety reigned within doors ; every face beamed with pleasure, and every voice extolled the worth of the hospitable host and hostess.

CHAPTER XIII.

HUNT AT COMPTON AUDLEY.

—“ Nothing I admire
Beyond the running of the well-train’d pack,
The trainings, everything ! keen on the scent !
At fault none losing heart ! but all at work !
None leaving his task to another ! answering
The watchful huntsman’s caution, check, or cheer,
As steed his rider’s rein ! Away they go !
How close they keep together ! What a pack !
Nor turn nor ditch nor stream divides them—as if
They moved with one intelligence, act, will !
And then the concert they keep up ! enough
To make one tenant of the merry wood,
To list their jocund music !

* * * * *

To wood and glen, hamlet and town, it is
A laughing holiday ! Not a hill-top
But’s then alive ! Footmen with horsemen vie ;
All earth ’s astir, roused with the revelry

Of vigour, health, and joy ! Cheer awakes cheer ;
While Echo's mimic tongue, that never tires,
Keeps up the hearty din ! Each face is then
Its neighbour's glass—where gladness sees itself,
And at the bright reflection, grows more glad !
Breaks into tenfold mirth ! laughs like a child !
Would make a gift of its heart, it is so free ;
Would scarce accept a kingdom, 'tis so rich ;
Shakes hands with all, and vows it never knew
That life was life before.”

SHERIDAN KNOWLES.

A SOUTHERLY wind, though not a very cloudy sky, ushered in the morning of the 10th of January ; and at nine o'clock a most formidable number of the disciples of Nimrod were assembled at the breakfast-table at Compton Audley. There are few scenes more cheering or exhilarating than this social meal, which precedes a day's hunting ; the blazing hearth, “the bubbling and loud hissing urn,” the abundant fare of the side-table, for Lord Atherley's was a Scotch “breakfast,”—

“ Not like the ghost
Of your curst English breakfast, your tea and your toast ;”

but a substantial meal of beefsteaks, kidneys, game, fowl, ham, tongue, fish, meat-pies, hot rolls, toast, muffins, marmalade, tea, coffee, chocolate, cocoa, with the more decided beverages in the form of ale, porter, and mountain dew.

The absence of the ladies had relieved the younger sportsmen of all feelings of restraint, and they were all wild in the joyful anticipation of a good day's run. Red-coats and green-coats were promiscuously mixed: some dressed "workman-like," in mahogany-looking long tops, with broad double-milled dark corduroy inexpressibles; others in "neat whites," with "couleur de beurre frais" tops to their boots, for in those days leathers were scouted as rural. The meal at length finished, the hacks were at the door; Lady Atherley's pony-phaeton was also in attendance, into which Lord Atherley placed her, grumbling at the same time dreadfully at the cook having put a *soupçon* too much of onion in the "Rognons

au vin de Champagne." Escorted by the "Pinks," they reached Warbleton Gorse, the place of meeting. How gay was the scene! red-coats, by dozens, were seen galloping towards this place of rendezvous; a line of carriages was drawn up, filled with the beauty and fashion of the neighbourhood.

"Now, Dudley!" exclaimed Lord Atherley; "you'll take care of Lady Atherley:—gently,—Azalia's very fresh. Why, John, where's my sandwich-box and my flask? we *must* keep body and soul together!" A few fair equestrians were mingled with the gentlemen.

Dudley was now assisting Lady Atherley to mount; and, retiring from the crowd, they took up their station on a rising ground. The hounds were hardly put into the gorse when they began to feather. Tom Baldwin, the huntsman, cheered them on. "Have at him, Melody! Yoicks! wind him, Dairymaid, my little woman!—a fox! I'll pound him. Hold

hard, gentlemen ! let them settle.” A moment’s pause, and away they went, with a brilliant scent, best pace, down the valley : here was a brook which some chosen few, among them the noble Earl, got into ; but, as old Tom sang,

“ Then give me the man to whom nought comes amiss,
One horse or another, *that* country or *this* ;
Who through falls and bad starts, undauntedly still,
Rides up to this motto, ‘ Be with them I will ! ’ ”

Through Stripes-hanger they hunted him beautifully, skirting Minstead-cover ; they rattled him by Woodbeding-heath, every hound doing his work.

“ Have at him Jew-boy ! Milkmaid, old girl ! ” cried Tom Baldwin ; “ they ’ll kill him —I ’ll pound it ! ”

On—on they went, crossed the Warbleton road, which let in a few of the skirters, among them Constance and Dudley. So well was the country known to the latter, that he had thus far piloted Lady Atherley in safety : she was the very *beau idéal* of a horsewoman ;

combining grace, confidence, and judgment, with a perfect hand, and possessing a most exquisite seat,

“ *qualis equos Threïssa fatigat
Harpalyce, volucremque fugâ prævertitur Eurum ;* ”

but, unlike the Thracian huntress, happily tempering courage with a feminine deportment.

“ Hold hard, gentlemen ; give them time ! ” shouted old Tom, a veteran of fifty-four, as they came to a check in Gatton Spinny.

“ Tally ho ! ” sputtered Lord Atherley, who, with flask in hand and a half-devoured sandwich in his mouth, had viewed the “ wily animal.”

“ Off to Yelverton ! ” exclaimed Tom, “ we’ll kill him yet ! ” Then seeing Lady Atherley, and doffing his velvet cap with the most affectionate gallantry, he said, “ Ah, my pretty lady, take the bridle-road to the left, leave Haldon on your right, and I’ll warrant you’ll be in time to win the brush ! ”

Away they went: Constance and Dudley followed the huntsman's directions. They had not proceeded far, when, in crossing a road, the horse Lady Atherley rode, the far-famed Azalia, put its foot in a rut, fell upon its head, and precipitated the lovely rider against a gate. To dismount, to call for assistance, and to convey Constance, who was completely stunned by the violence of the fall, to the nearest town, was the work of a few minutes. There, safely established at the Dun Cow, Highbury Cross, Dudley, after sending for the surgeon, despatched his groom to Lord Atherley, and directed a postboy “on,” to order the carriage to be brought immediately. Mr. Jones, who had served in the medical department with the army in Spain, pronounced the case not at all likely to be attended with bad consequences; and having bandaged Lady Atherley’s arm, which had been slightly sprained, ordered quiet, and took his leave. Left, then, to the care of Ravensworth and the head chambermaid,—who,

with that discretion so requisite to females in her department, thought her absence would be more agreeable than her company, and accordingly left the room, — Lady Atherley enjoyed a half-hour's fitful repose. During that time of brief rest we may introduce our readers to a most important personage, Mr. Wright, head-waiter and manager of the Dun Cow.

Harry Wright had been born and bred within the sound of Bow-bells: he exasperated the eighth letter of the alphabet most terrifically. He had been literally brought up in the bar, his father and grandfather had been waiters before him: the very first accents he had been taught to lisp were, “Coming, Sir!” At an early age he was placed in a club, to learn his business; and there he first developed those talents which, in after-life, were of such marked service to him. At the period we allude to, clubs were in their infancies; and the one, now no longer in existence, at which

Harry's precocious genius was evinced, had gained the name of "the cheap and nasty!" "the rag and famish!" As is usual, joints were ready from five o'clock upwards. But we will give Harry's own words, then a lad of eleven years of age, to the steward.

"I wish a few words, Mr. Simmonds, with you at your hearliest leisure."

"Walk in, Harry; I hope nothing has gone wrong for your father's sake,—I wish to make you comfortable!" replied the good-humoured *chef*.

"I've something on my mind *has* makes me werry *unappy*."

"Speak out, my boy."

"Vy, I tell ye vot *hit his*; you knows them two gentlemen vot dines here every day at No. 12, near the *vindy*. Vel, they comes at five, and as the jint up; they vaits half an *our*, gets their appetites, and takes a cut at the next; and at six o'clock they vinds up with a third: three jints for 1 and 6, hincluding vegetables and

small beer ! But that aint the vorst, for I'm blessed if they don't order at nine o'clock two cups of tea werry hot, werry sweet, and werry strong ; and then they grombles as it is too strong, desires me to bring some *ot* water, and then takes and makes a hextra cup of tea a-piece ; ewading the charge, witch is nine-pence regular tea, but only four-pence a cup. Now, if this haint a dodge, I don't know vot is."

This affair coming to the ears of the committee caused a sensation ; and, as the weakest usually go to the wall, Harry, spite of the remonstrances of the steward, was dismissed. But his talents were not long allowed to remain idle. He was shortly taken into a tavern under the "Piazzas," where he passed from boyhood into manhood. The coffee-house we allude to was then in great vogue, and Harry had been promoted to the important situation of head-waiter. He had won his employer's heart by the economical manner in which he curtailed a bottle of wine of its fair propor-

tions. “ Bring me a bottle of wine, quick, waiter !”

“ Yes, sar ; I’ll make a *pint* of it,” rejoined Harry with a knowing wink ; and which, after straining, and the usual perquisite bottoms, he managed to accomplish.

There was no man that could read the character of his customers quicker than Harry. If a country squire, rude in health, with a voracious rural appetite, ordered dinner, he would recommend a beautiful boiled leg of pork from his master’s farm—the real *basse cour* being an alley out of the Strand ; and, should the gentleman like a glass of old port, he was to be sure to ask for Bin 4, Beeswing, worth a guinea a bottle. He would also venture to suggest to the gentleman, if a stranger and if going to the play, to leave his purse at the bar, as there were so many scamps about the Piázzees. If an emaciated guinea-coloured wise man of the East should appear, he would point out the excellence of the Mullagatawny ;

the curried lobster, “from a receipt given master by the nabob of Arcot’s interpreter.” If a pampered West-end exquisite lisped out, “Anything you’ve got—quick!”—he flattered his palate by a delicate smelt,—white bait, pulled and grilled chicken, and a “bottle of Bourdeaux from master’s own vineyard;” gently saying, “that a lady in a green chariot had inquired for the captain, but would not leave her name.” To gentlemen with Bardolph visages he would confidentially communicate the fact of there being half a dozen magnums of the finest vintage,—the Regent had offered the largest sum for them: the above half dozen, at a calculation of one or two per week consumed, had lasted nearly seven years! To “love-sick swains” who penned pink billet-doux to the nymphs of the theatres, Harry was equally attentive: “He had a friend behind the scenes who would see the note delivered.” In short, he was the Crichton of the fraternity of waiters. In the art of making punch,

cup, bishop, negus, restorative,—he was declared, nem. con., undeniable—*nulli secundus!* Mr. Wright was a man of impenetrable assurance, imperturbable self-possession, and despite his own expression, — that he scorned a lie,—gave such a mendacious embroidery to all his conversation, that made his auditors rather sceptical on the point of his veracity. Unfortunately Mr. Wright had one other failing,—but one!—a love for the turf! By his own account he knew every trial, talked of dead certainties, which, however, somehow or other, seldom “came off;” and occasionally by standing a trifling part of the stakes or bets with a rich patron, to whom he had been generally useful, he picked up a reasonable trifle. In the event of losing, the amount was too insignificant to call upon him for payment. One unlucky day he “set his life’s fees upon a cast;” the horse that he knew was dead lame won, and Harry was cleaned out! One consolation remained. “What gentleman,” he ex-

claimed, “ could back a Brummagem horse ?” Harry paid his debts of honour, and for a time retired to an excellent hostelry at Richmond. From thence he had been promoted to the management of the Dun Cow at Highbury Cross. Our digression has led us away from a conversation that was being carried on in the bar, between the above redoubtable hero, and young Jem, a *waiterette*, and which we give verbatim—Jem loquitur :

“ Shocking accident that — No. 4. Poor gentleman ! how dreadfully cut up he seems at his wife’s accident.”

“ Wife !” replied Harry, with a knowing sort of a ‘ do-you-see-any-sand-in-my-eyeish ’ look ; “ wife ! oh, no, not his wife ; can halways tell the difference,—learnt it when I lived at Richmond.”

“ Learnt what ? ” exclaimed the novice, looking up with reverential awe to this very Nestor of “ coming, sirs.”

“ Why, I tell you what it is, and how you

are in future to know the difference. When a gentleman comes to the house with a lady, and hallooës ‘ Waitor ! waitor !’ pulls the bell down, and says, ‘ Get dinner,—soup, fish, flesh, fowl, lots of dessert, and a bottle of iced champagne !’ you may depend upon it he’s a courting, the lady is his sweetheart or his *ma’am* : but when he gently touches the bell, and requests a little quiet dinner, anything that can be got, and says ‘ Mary, my love, as I don’t drink wine we’ll have half a pint of sherry; and never mind dessert, as all fruit is so unwholesome,’ be assured he is hawfully, lawfully joined in oly matrimony. The proof’s infallible, as much so as meeting a private soldier arm in arm with a female ; *he never walks so with his wife after the honeymoon.*”

But this instructive *tête-à-tête* was put an end to by the arrival of a party of young military sportsmen, quartered in the neighbouring barracks, and who for “ auld lang syne ” never passed mine host of the Dun Cow without making a call.

"Well, Harry, old fellow! how does the world use you?" said a young mustachioed Cornet.

"Pretty well, Captain Harcourt, thank you." Harry always gave brevet rank.

"Bring me a glass of the undeniable, hot and strong,—club fashion. Do you understand?"

"Would the gentlemen like any thing to eat? there's an excellent cold beef-steak pie," said Harry, imperturbably, for he always had an eye to business.

"Bring the pie of course, and lots of hot potatoes."

"Yes, sar."

"And some pickles."

"Yes, sar."

"And plenty of ale, your own tap."

"Yes, sar." Harry left the room, but shortly returned.

"Who's to win the Derby?"

"Yes, sar." The luncheon was laid out.

"Any sport, gentlemen?" inquired Harry.

"Capital run, old boy! but my mare threw a shoe," replied Cornet Montague.

"And a demn'd farmer crossed me and threw me out," responded Sir John Fitzosborne.
"But here's Williams, he'll tell us all about it."
At this moment he entered.

"Well, Williams, what did you do when we left? You were going rather faster than lightning, as if you had a letter to deliver to the fox."

"Capital run!" exclaimed the latter, who from his flibbertigibbet propensities and love of the stable was generally known by the familiar appellation of 'Will of the Wisp;—five-and-forty minutes, only one check, all grass, and killed at Yelverton! I lost my start, had great difficulty to regain it, trying to get an introduction to that perfect Diana. What a lucky fellow Atherley is!"

"Or rather Ravensworth," replied Montague.

"Ah! she was his first love; 'et on revient toujours à ses premiers amours,'" chanted Sir John.

"But what's that?—a find, by heaven!" exclaimed Charles Williams, calling the attention of the party to two horses that were being led through the yard. "I'll swear to the bay; that's my lady's."

"And I to the chestnut," said Sir John; "it's the gallant gay Lothario's. Harry, Harry!" Mr. Wright entered.

"Did you call, gentlemen?"

"In the name of morality! Harry, what is going on at the Dun Cow?" asked Montague. "Where are the respective owners of those horses?"

"Up stairs in No. 4. The lady has had a very bad fall—rayther better now; they've sent for the carriage," answered Harry.

"Come, come, Harry, we won't have it,—it's a regular settled affair!"

"Upon my word, gentlemen!" replied Mr. Wright.

"Nonsense!" interrupted Harcourt, "you'd swear to it; you are like the Irish witness, who

took his oath before he got up in the morning that he would not speak a word of truth during the day ; that's what you'd call at Newmarket ' hedging your conscience.' But is Lord Atherley here ? "

" No, sir ; he has been sent for."

" Poor fellow ! Poor devil ! Lucky rascal ! What flats some men are !" escaped the lips of the party, who, mounting their horses, lit their cigars, and proceeded to ride a steeple-chace home in the most approved Melton manner. Charley Williams was to receive a sovereign from each of the party, have a start, and to whoever caught him he was to return double the stakes back. Only one collar-bone was broken on this occasion.

Lady Atherley had created a great sensation at the beginning of the day. Her disappearance, accompanied by Dudley, had been commented upon ; hints and innuendoes had been thrown out, and had furnished food to the scandal-loving propensities of the hunting-field. A few

random shots at the mess, and the usual gossip of the waiters, boots, chambermaids, and ostlers of the Dun Cow, spread like wild-fire. In less than an hour the Highbury Cross Figaro hinted at an elopement; the penny-a-liners were already at work for the public prints. In the mean time Lady Atherley's carriage had arrived. Before, however, taking leave of the Dun Cow, we must pay a parting visit to the tap, where were assembled a most motley group. First and foremost, Joseph Sharp, ostler, always called by his sponsorial abbreviation Joe; who, agreeably to the generally recognised *εἰδωλον* of the species, was a stout bloated man, encased in velveteen, with a sealskin cap;

“ Wallowing, unwieldy, enormous in his gait ;

* * * * *

Big as his butt, and for the self-same use—

To take in stores of strong-fermented juice.”

Next came his Scotch terrier “ Wasp,” whose collar showed the waggishness of his master: the inscription ran thus:—“ I'm Joseph Sharp's

dog, pray whose dog are you?" Then there was Dan, a youth who like the farmer of Tilsbury vale,

" All trades, as need was, did young Daniel assume,—
Served as stable-boy, errand-boy, porter, and groom."

First and second turn-out boys, Sir John Fitzosborne's tiger, and Cornet Gray's Yorkshire groom, Sam Fulford, completed the group. The tiger was a regular London scamp, who was " chaffing" some countrymen most unmercifully; " Talk of that bullfinch being tame,"—looking at a miserable bird that was trying to draw a small bucket out of a well,— " vy, he's nothing to vot I'se got at home ! Vy, ve've a pet oyster as follows me about the stable-yard, a regular Colchester vone !"

" It's all right and no mistake," replied York, pulling from his pocket three thimbles and a pea. " Now, young Saacy, I'll have my revenge. Down with your brownies,—perhaps these gentlemen would like a turn?" The rustics opened their eyes, as they saw him com-

mence a game, which has been of late years immortalised in the political world by its most talented member,—how justly we will not attempt to say. “Would you like to bet half a crown?” persevered Sam, addressing a quiet, sedate, methodistical-looking man, who had just entered, and who, by his faded plush breeches and drab upper benjamin, was evidently a coachman out of place, and one of those who advertise for a situation in a “sober, religious family.”

“I never wager more than a halfpenny bun,” replied the man; “and then, if I lose, I always stipulate to get the first bite.”

Failing in this attempt, the industrious *pie voleur* gave the following running accompaniment.

“Vone, two, three—game of the little pea. Hegham, Windsor, Staines; Windsor’s vere the King lives. The honly difference between is castle and my thimble his, that his is permanent, and mine’s locomotive. It’s I to hide,

and you to find ; it only requires a quick eye and a good hobservation for to say vere the little hobject his. This is the *multum in parvo* game, vich means as you may vin a werry large sum vith a werry small capital. Them as plays can't vin, and them as don't play can't hexpect to vin. Now, I'll bet any gentleman from a brownie to a bob as they don't diskiver the little pea."

"Done!" cried one, touching a thimble.

"*Non hest inwentus.* 'Though lost to sight, to memory dear!'" said the imitating Sam, the thimble mocking-bird, pocketing the shilling.

"Try again, gentlemen ; I'll wager a sovereign,—quite a good one, for I makes it at home. But fair play's a jewel—no assistance. I heard you wink just now."

The game was carried on for some time, to the evident discomfiture of the clods, and was only put an end to by the arrival of the boy who had been despatched for Lady Atherley's carriage.

"A pint of arf-and-arf, Sary," said he, addressing a red-headed, slip-shod wench, in slatternly disarray, who acted as the village Hebe, and presided over the spirituous liquor department; "a glass of arf-and-arf. I've had a sharpish ride, fifteen miles in an hour and a 'kevarter.' "

"Pretty sunshiny job!" said first turn-out, holding up both his hands; for be it known there is a road freemasonry by which drivers ascertain the gratuity given, each finger representing a shilling, and which at every stage is held up to warn the new driver.

"Yes, two fives; he's a trump is Mr. Ravensworth."

"What business has he here with another man's wife?" exclaimed Sarah, indignantly. "I *heered* talk of *him*; he's no better nor he should be."

"Never mind, Sary; vot's the odds so long as you're happy! Give me sixpennyworth of gin and bitters. Oh, never mind the measure,

if you've lost it ; my mouth jist holds a gill ! ”

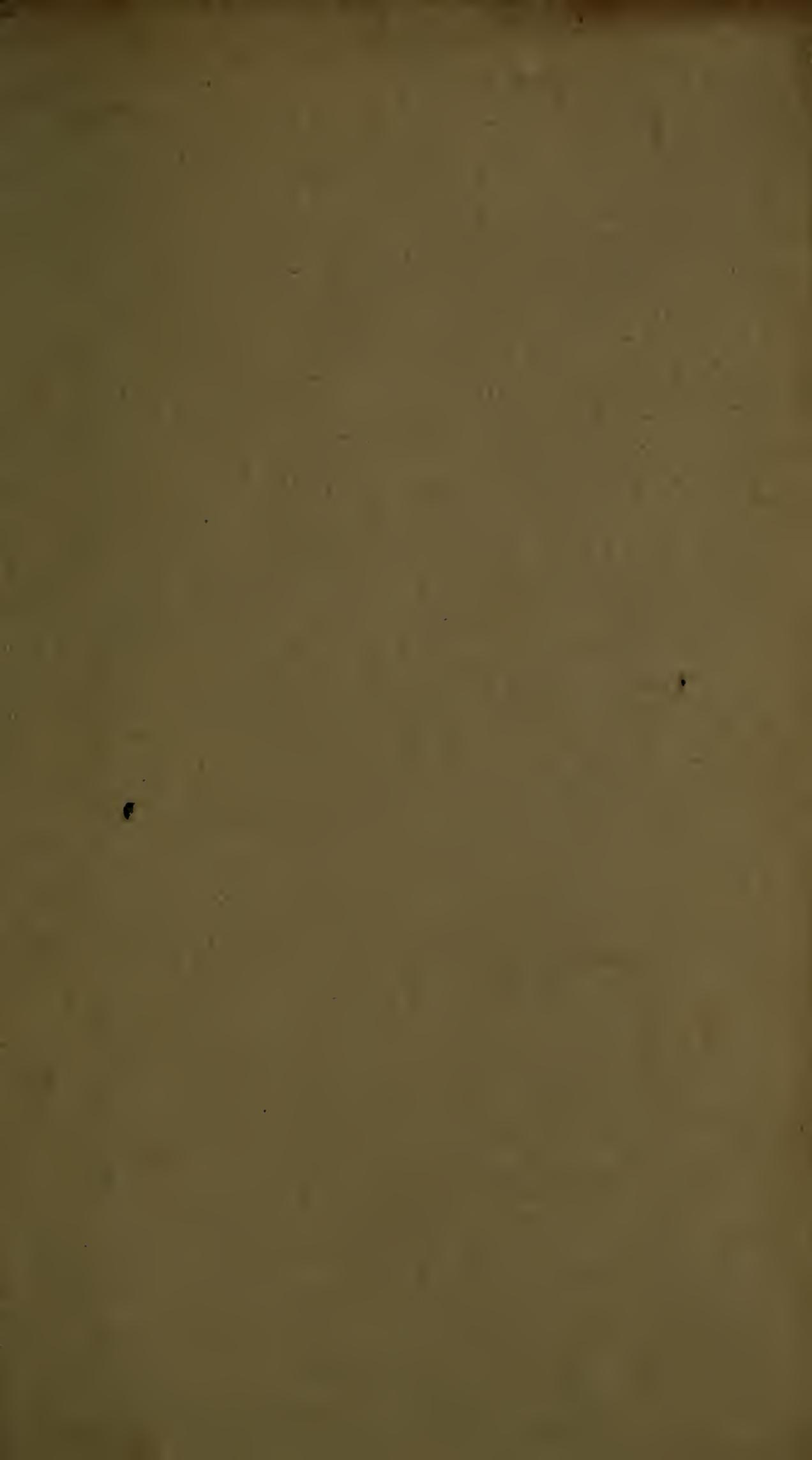
“ Well, my mind is,” replied Sarah, perseveringly, “ as Mr. Ravensworth’s an oudacious profligie ; and Lord Atherley—but it sarves him right.” Poor Sarah Speers, wanting yet the name of wife, had felt

“ The weakness, painful and most pitiful,
By which a virtuous woman, in pure youth,
May be delivered to distress and shame.”

She had been brought up in Lord Atherley’s family ; and, but for the little misfortune, might have ended her days in it. As it was at present, she was a mother and a spinster—all in one ; doomed to drench human brutes, from the rising of the sun even unto the setting of the same !

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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